

INTERPRETING ELKMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT:
A CASE STUDY ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE NPS

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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Freeman Tilden asserted in his book *Interpreting Our Heritage* that good interpretation is necessary for historic preservation. This thesis evaluates the relationship between interpretation and historic preservation at Elkmont Historic District in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Elkmont Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993, but the Park's interpretive policy prevented both the District's preservation and interpretation. The events that followed led to a shift in interpretive policy and therefore historic preservation policy in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

This thesis provides a context for Elkmont Historic District, a chronological history of Great Smoky Mountains National Park administrators' management of Elkmont Historic District, and an analysis of the Park staff's modes of interpretation regarding Elkmont. Since 1993, Great Smoky Mountains' staff have made great strides in effectively interpreting and preserving Elkmont Historic District, though there is still room for improvement. As such, Great Smokies' successes and

shortcomings at Elkmont Historic District provide numerous interpretation, historic preservation, and fiscal lessons for the National Park Service. The most important lesson is the conclusion that a national park staff's interpretation (or lack of interpretation) does influence what is (or is not) preserved in national parks.

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I could not have completed this work if it were not for the people supporting me every step of the way. I would like to begin by thanking my thesis committee: Dr. Kristen Baldwin Deathridge, Dr. Timothy Silver, and Dr. Bruce Stewart. They were among the first people I met upon my arrival at Appalachian State University, and they have continued to invest in me and mentor me throughout my time at this institution.

I would also like to thank my “family” at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. I am grateful to Michael Aday and John McDade for providing me with my first opportunity to work with the National Park Service. I would not be where I am today without their influence in my life. This thesis is also possible because of Dianne Flaugh and her willingness to allow me to work with her and conduct research for Historic Structure Reports on buildings at Elkmont Historic District. I am forever indebted to Lynda Doucette, Florie Takaki, and Michael Smith for introducing me to the field of interpretation, allowing me to work with them, and mentoring me to become a better interpreter.

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believing in me and holding me to a higher academic standard than I thought I could achieve at the time. He was correct, I am capable.

I would also like to thank Lisa Robinson (1958-2014), Christy Coulter, Carrie Beth Lowe, and Heidi Sise for their encouragement and support. They familiarized me with and mentored me in the operation and use of libraries. I am a better student, researcher, public historian, and library patron because of them. The experience they gave me prepared me for graduate school and my internships at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Their interest in my education and my research encouraged me to continue chasing my dreams.

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could maintain my sanity while in graduate school. The love and support of each of these individuals is what enabled this project to come to fruition.

Dedication

To all the people whose buildings in Great Smoky Mountains National Park
were lost to removal or demolition by neglect.

and

In memory of Millie Jo (September 23, 2012-November 2, 2017),
the best friend a girl could ever want.

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Introduction

My parents brought me to Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a young child. We were only a thirty-minute drive away, so I played games with my sister as we counted how many deer we could spot as our family drove the Cades Cove Loop. I held my sleeping bag tight as thunder cracked and echoed through the forest one night while camping next to the Little River. I spun an old-time wooden buzzer toy while attending a program at the Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse, and my eyes beheld the wonder of the *Photinus carolinus* synchronous firefly several years before the Park held their first annual firefly event in 2006.¹ The place grew special to me, but I quickly realized that I was not the only one who felt this way.

I never questioned the natural beauty of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Like many people, I believed it was a wilderness. Yet I was always aware that people once lived here. I stood at an overlook on the Foothills Parkway, and I wondered what it was like to be a Native American or one of the first resettlers gazing out over the expansive forest.² What did they think as their eyes beheld this wondrous scene? Did it look the same as today, or was the vista different? These questions echoed through my mind, but I never wondered about the lives of the people who lived among these mountains as I visited the historic structures in Cades Cove or Roaring Fork. Then I visited Elkmont.

¹ Public Affairs Office, “2017 Synchronous Firefly Viewing Dates,” National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, published April 25, 2017, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 28, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/2017-synchronous-firefly-viewing-dates.htm>.

² In recent years, the park has strongly emphasized the use of the term "resettler" because the Europeans were neither pioneers nor the first settlers of the region. This intentional selection in vocabulary was a response to the 1982 *GMP* which used the word pioneers. Despite this shift in practice, the current *Foundation Document* refers to the continuum of human presence and does not have a specific word for the people who settled in the region.

As a child, one can visit Cades Cove and Roaring Fork and easily accept that the Great Smoky Mountains was an isolated place where people lived in primitive conditions. It was a place of log cabins and self-sufficiency, closed off from the rest of the world. Little do most visitors know, this is far from the truth. This issue haunted me after I was introduced to the Elkmont Historic District in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It was a place my family camped, hiked, and viewed wildlife. It was also a place with buildings that looked different from the other historic structures in the Park.

People built the colorful buildings in Elkmont using frame construction, screen doors, glass windows, and gingerbread-like trim. Each building looked unique, but unlike the buildings in other historic districts in the Park, the Park management had clearly neglected these buildings. The paint was faded, porches had soft spots, steps had collapsed, and the buildings sported signs warning against trespassing. I did not see those signs at first; rather, the interpretive sign explaining that the entire Elkmont Historic District would eventually be removed, and the environment would be returned to its prehistoric state captured my attention.³

Immediately, more questions left to mind. Who had lived here? Why not preserve their buildings? Why not tell their story? These people lived in the Smokies, too. The “backwards” people who owned the primitive cabins were not the only people who lived within the boundaries of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This land was affected by a human presence and not just during the “pioneer” era. Native Americans once lived in this place when it was “natural,” though they are not mentioned in the interpretive panels at

³ Interpretive Panel, Jakes Creek Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, early 2000s.

Elkmont. How do the Rangers even know what the land looked like before a non-Indian presence?⁴ Could they recreate that environment? The questions felt endless and frustrating.

With time, some of my questions about Elkmont were answered. I began research in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives in 2015 while conducting my undergraduate senior research project. The archivist brought to my attention that Park policy regarding preservation of Elkmont Historic District changed when Great Smoky Mountains' staff amended the 1982 *General Management Plan* in 2010 following a thorough study of the Elkmont Historic District and the implications of its placement on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.⁵ My experience as an archives intern at Great Smoky Mountains National Park during summer of 2015 revealed more answers to my questions regarding Elkmont. While at the Archives, I assisted with several historic structure reports for buildings in the Elkmont Historic District and conducted biographical research on Elkmont property owners. Further study of National Park history, environmental history, and historic preservation while in graduate school provided context for the Park staff's management of Elkmont Historic District. Yet, I remained curious about Elkmont and a new question emerged that I seek to answer here.

I learned over time that the poor management and neglect of Elkmont Historic District was not a phenomenon unique to this historic district. Throughout Great Smoky Mountains National Park, staff and interpretive information tell a specific narrative.⁶ The specific narrative that is told at a given park may vary from the narrative at another park, but each park always has an official narrative. Both the resources and the history presented to the

⁴ National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1982, 61.

⁵ National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, 2009, 3.

⁶ National Park Service, *Foundation Document*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2016, 2, 9.

public must reflect a given park's narrative themes, known formally as interpretive themes.⁷ Knowing this, I wondered: what is the relationship between historic preservation and interpretation in the National Park Service, and why does that relationship matter? I could answer that question broadly, but with 417 units in the National Park Service, such a broad question is beyond the scope of this project.⁸ I came to this question through Elkmont in the first place, so I will continue to use Elkmont Historic District as a case study in order to answer my ultimate research question. This thesis discusses the ways in which the 1982 *General Management Plan* and 2016 *Foundation Document* of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and their interpretive themes have influenced the preservation of Elkmont Historic District.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park's administrative staff understandably designed their 1982 *General Management Plan* to support the wilderness theory that emerged in the 1960s as well as to include interpretive themes supporting tourism that in turn perpetuated stereotypes and eliminated important historical components of the area's past.⁹ This NPS document omitted the Elkmont community's role in the development of the Park over time, and, on a practical level, resulted in management that included demolition by neglect, a management policy the 1982 *General Management Plan* upholds.¹⁰ Park staff tell a specific narrative to the 11,000,000 people who visit Great Smoky Mountains National Park every year. This narrative fails to follow the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards of Treatment* and

⁷ National Park Service, 2, 9.

⁸ "Frequently Asked Questions," About Us, National Park Service, accessed September 14, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/faqs.htm>.

⁹ National Park Service, *General Management Plan*; National Park Service, *Foundation Document*.

¹⁰ Eleanor Dickinson, "E L K M O N T" (manuscript), 1992, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Eleanor Creekmore Dickinson, "ELKMONT: The Heart of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 1999, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1982, 29.

presents a manipulated and false impression of the historic environment at Elkmont Historic District by suggesting that the Park is a static museum, something that is not possible in an ever-evolving natural environment.¹¹ The Park's 1926 enabling legislation reveals the roots of these issues in its statement of the Park's purpose.

The goal the Park began with on May 22, 1926 was simply to “set apart as public parks [Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park] for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”¹² This, in turn, referred to the Organic Act of 1916. The 2016 *Foundation Document* replaced the 1982 *General Management Plan* and describes the goal of Great Smoky Mountains National Park by quoting the 1926 enabling legislation.¹³ However, the authors of the 1982 *General Management Plan* put the goal in their own words following their reference to the 1926 and 1916 legislation by stating:

The purpose of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is to preserve its exceptionally diverse resources and to provide for public benefit from and enjoyment of those resources in way that will leave them – and the dynamic natural processes of which they are components – essentially unaltered by the visitors who enjoy them.¹⁴

This definition of the Park's goal does not differentiate between natural and cultural resources. However, when the authors mention “diverse resources,” the context often implies they are referencing natural resources. For many years, Park staff viewed the purpose of the Park as pertaining to the enjoyment and protection of natural resources more than they did cultural resources, despite the Organic Act's inclusion of cultural resources in the defined goal of the National Park Service as a whole. The Southern Appalachian National Park Commission set this precedent in 1924 when its members defined the purpose of their

¹¹ Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995).

¹² 16 U.S.C. (403).

¹³ National Park Service, *Foundation Document*, 4.

¹⁴ National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 5.

proposed national park and omitted all reference to cultural resources in their six criteria for a national park in southern Appalachia.¹⁵

Upholding the goals of enjoying and protecting a natural world that happens to contain some “remnants” of a human presence led to the creation of a previously non-existent world. Official Park documents do not deny manipulation of the landscape, removal of buildings, or directing visitor traffic as they present narratives designed to reinforce wilderness theory and promote tourism. The 1926 enabling legislation emphasized the people and their enjoyment of the Park, after all. Thus, it comes as no surprise when the Park’s administrative staff state in the 1982 *General Management Plan* that it is “supreme sanctuary that provides the underlying theme of the park,” and that the “highest purpose of the park’s interpretive efforts is believed to be a demonstration of how it is preserved as a sanctuary from some of the effects of the modern technological world and how its special qualities can relate to – and benefit – the people of that world.”¹⁶ It also does not come as a surprise when both the 1982 *General Management Plan* and the 2016 *Foundation Document* emphasize Great Smoky Mountains’ possession of the largest collection of log structures in the southern Appalachian Region.¹⁷ A number of national park and Appalachian historians agree that the primitive, isolated, and backwards stereotypical mountaineer lifestyle drew people to the southern Appalachian region to vacation and that this attraction played a role in the creation of Great Smokies National Park for the enjoyment of the people.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the Park’s

¹⁵ National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District*, 20.

¹⁶ National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 32.

¹⁷ National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 13; National Park Service, *Foundation Document*, 3.

¹⁸ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism in the Mountain South: A Double-Edged Sword* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee

focus on natural resources serves to emphasize only those cultural resources that attract visitors attracted to “rustic” buildings, results in the omission of many people’s stories, and implies a false narrative.

This thesis seeks to challenge the official narratives designed to reinforce wilderness theory and promote tourism that ultimately brought harm to the Park’s cultural resources and promoted a false regional identity. As a solution, one proposition is the Park’s inclusion of multiple narratives as a means to more holistically preserve, enjoy, and interpret resources *to the public*. This thesis will illustrate how the Park staff have made efforts to include multiple narratives while failing to make those narratives accessible to the public, the people to whom the Park belongs. Great Smoky Mountains is not alone; parks throughout the NPS face these issues that affect interpretation and preservation of resources that belong to the American public. Each park’s struggle with interpretation and historic preservation does not occur in isolation. The culmination of each park’s narrative and resources tell the story of America’s past in addition to the individual park’s story. Thus, when an individual park’s narrative is too narrow, the park’s heritage is not the only heritage threatened: America’s heritage is threatened when the National Park Service’s interpretive and historic preservation efforts fall short.

The solution to such daunting shortcomings proves neither straightforward nor simple. The Organic Act of 1916 states that the goal of the National Park Service is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to

Press, 2007); John Fowler, “Appalachia’s Agony: A Historiographical Essay on Modernization and Development in the Appalachian Region,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 72 (3, 1998): 305-328; Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013); Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University Of Alabama Press, 2009); Stephen Whitaker, “A New Wave of Colonization: The Economics of the Tourism and Travel Industry in Appalachian Kentucky,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 6 (½, 2000): 35-48.

provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹⁹ For parks like Great Smoky Mountains that contain both natural and cultural history, this complicates management and interpretation. The Organic Act’s mandate also carries with it connotations of also caring for a prehistoric wilderness landscape. While one expects that the National Park Service, the umbrella bureau for parts of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the National Register of Historic Places, would make an effort to preserve all historically relevant sites for the heritage of the United States of America on a local, regional, and national level, cultural resources are not the only thing that the National Park Service seeks to protect.²⁰ Great Smoky Mountains National Park’s heavy reliance upon wilderness theory and the environmental movement when making decisions regarding cultural resources complicates matters for both preservation and interpretation of cultural resources. At the same time, the Park’s historic goal to preserve a specific landscape is understandable and even respectable given the area’s rich natural history. Thus, a significant component of answering the question at hand includes exploring this complex relationship that is increasingly becoming a prominent issue in parks that have been assumed to be mostly “natural.”As people begin to realize that humans have walked and lived on most land in the United State of America, this case study on Elkmont Historic District becomes important not just for the sake of Great Smoky Mountains National Park but also in speaking to the narratives told at national parks across the nation as they balance the preservation and enjoyment of both natural and cultural resources.²¹

¹⁹ 16 U.S.C. (1).

²⁰ 16 U.S.C. (470).

²¹ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* (Bloomington, IN: Organization of American

There are numerous histories of the National Park Service that evaluate the purpose and goals of the National Park Service.²² Similarly there are histories of the historic preservation movement, and occasionally these histories overlap with those of the NPS when they evaluate the extent to which the National Park Service is responsible for preservation of cultural resources and the production of its own cultural resources.²³ In chapter one, I contribute to this discussion by evaluating the origins of Appalachian tourism, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the environmental movement, and interpretation in the National Park Service. These brief histories ultimately intersect and enable me to lay the foundation for my argument in the following chapters.

The remainder of my thesis contains the majority of my argument and contribution to existing literature. In the second chapter, I lay out the elusive official narrative of the Elkmont Historic District that the National Park staff present to the public. I say “the public” with hesitation because the official narrative does exist, but locating and compiling a narrative is not an easy task. For this reason, accessibility is a prominent theme as the latter of half of chapter two addresses *how* and *why* the official narrative was composed by Great Smoky Mountains staff members. The third chapter serves as the antithesis to chapter two. In this chapter, I consider alternative, though unselected, management plans and consequential narratives proposed in the *General Management Plan Amendment* published in 2010. In addition to these alternatives, I suggest other possible narratives and interpretive themes.

Historians, 2011); Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²² Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*. 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010); Richard West Sellers, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

²³ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).

Exploring these possibilities enables me to grapple with the relationship between historic preservation and interpretation in the National Park Service and argue that management of historic sites in national parks directly affects their interpretation and vice versa.

Management decisions determine what is preserved, which interpretive themes are emphasized, which stories are told, and the public's access to both the site and the information. Yet, once interpretive policies are put into place, they determine what is preserved and how it is managed. Finally, in chapter four, I address why the relationship between historic preservation and interpretation at Great Smoky Mountains National Park's Elkmont Historic District is important for the National Park Service as a whole.

One might think that one historic district, its preservation, and its interpretation matters little outside of its immediate context. However, this could not be farther from the truth. The conversation that Elkmont Historic District brings up contributes to multiple vital conversations regarding historic preservation, interpretation, and National Park Service history. Elkmont Historic District's significance and management has been a topic of conversation among the former residents of Elkmont, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park's management, and the public since before the Park's establishment. Yet, an academic study regarding this controversial historic district within a national park has never been published. Many people have made inquiries, but their manuscripts never reached publication.²⁴ Thus, this thesis builds on existing literature by presenting an academic study of Elkmont Historic District and placing it within the context of existing National Park

²⁴ See: Eleanor Dickinson, "E L K M O N T" (manuscript), 1992, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Eleanor Creekmore Dickinson, "ELKMONT: The Heart of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 1999, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Claudia S. Konker, "History Talk and Walk: Upper Little River a.k.a. Elkmont, 1900-2007," 2007, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Service management histories and official National Park documents. One goal is to challenge Great Smoky Mountains' interpretive themes and their influence on the management of cultural resources, specifically historic buildings. In doing this, the thesis highlights a point of tension in NPS units possessing the National Park designation: overemphasis on natural resources at the expense of cultural resources. Focusing on a historic district possessing debated historical value due to its representation of a time period more recent than the Park's interpretive themes, this thesis also addresses the issue of interpretation of the Park's history rather than just the history of the land and the people who preceded the Park. Finally, the relationship between historic preservation and interpretation at Elkmont Historic District demonstrates that while a park may in theory have an official narrative reflecting their cultural resources, preservation and interpretation have little value or impact if the information is inaccessible. Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." They cannot enjoy or benefit from that which is inaccessible even if it is well-preserved and well-interpreted. This applies to the entire National Park Service, not just Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Chapter 1

Elkmont's Many Intersecting Narratives

At first glance, the story of Elkmont and its southern Appalachian resorts seems like a simple and straightforward narrative. The town was a small mountain logging and resort community that became a part of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It was neither Cataloochee nor Cades Cove since it contained only a few log cabins and was not a large community consisting of mountaineers. For years, it has appeared on websites as a “newly discovered abandoned ghost town.”²⁵ The story seems to end there. Elkmont was seen as unimportant and hardly worthy of a footnote in a greater story. At least that is the way it looks. In reality, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, the community of Elkmont found itself within national and regional narratives.

Walking through a National Park that immaculately preserves “primitive” log cabins, one does not expect to walk past approximately 74 buildings that warn entry is dangerous.²⁶ Their roofs caved in over the years, and their deteriorating flooring has soft spots spread

²⁵ Austin Coop, “Tour the creepy abandoned building of the Elkmont Historic District,” *Destination Strange, Roadtrippers*, October 2, 2014, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://roadtrippers.com/stories/elkmont-historic-district>; Ashley Hubbard, “The Sad History of the Elkmont Ghost Town and Why You should Visit Before it’s Gone,” *A Southern Gypsy*, April 15, 2017, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://asoutherngypsy.com/elkmont-ghost-town/>; Ashley Hubbard, “Finding the Abandoned Wonderland in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” *A Southern Gypsy*, July 8, 2016, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://asoutherngypsy.com/abandoned-wonderland-smoky-mountains-national-park/>; “Elkmont Ghost Town of the Great Smoky Mountains,” *TheGreatSmokies.net*, September 7, 2012, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.thegreatsmokies.net/elkmont-ghost-town-great-smoky-mountains/>; “Elkmont Ghost Town,” *Trip Advisor*, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g143031-d8426768-Reviews-Elkmont_Ghost_Town-Great_Smoky_Mountains_National_Park_Tennessee.html; “Elkmont,” *Ghosttowns.com*, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/tn/elkmont.html>.

²⁶ Eleanor Dickinson, “Elkmont Community Historic District,” *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, Appalachian Club, January 30, 1993; Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, “Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.,” *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, Appalachian Club, February 4, 1994.

throughout. Decorative trim is missing because of vandalism. Elkmont could not possibly be important, or it would have had better care. It is merely a brief chapter within Great Smoky Mountains National Park and thus a seemingly unimportant cultural resource of the National Park Service. This is the message the Park's staff sends to visitors: Great Smoky Mountains National Park contains more important cultural resources than Elkmont Historic District. Yet, Great Smoky Mountains National Park's staff is beginning to realize Elkmont Historic District is in fact an important chapter within the area's history because Elkmont Historic District has the threads of many important local, regional, and national stories woven throughout its own story. What follows is a brief account of some of those intersecting narratives that formed the foundation for the Park staff's management of Elkmont Historic District.

Environmental Movement

When people think about the environmental movement, their minds often jump to the 1960s. However, the roots of the environmental movement and wilderness theory began much earlier in the nineteenth century when the idea of the national parks first came to the attention of the American public. Evidence suggests that the environmental movement began as early as the 1830s with the destruction of Niagara Falls when opportunists turned it into a spectacle, and people began setting aside America's natural wonders as a testimony to America's heritage.²⁷ These ideas formed the basis of the national park idea that influences the Department of the Interior's management of the National Park Service to this day.

Many people value wilderness now, but that was not always the case. People did not love the wilderness or value it for its scenery or its positive contributions to the health of the

²⁷ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), 5-9.

population. Roderick Frazier Nash makes this clear in his discussion on wilderness semantics in his classic *Wilderness and the American Mind*.²⁸ The European settlers of the North American continent feared the wilderness and possessed an innate need to conquer and civilize wilderness.²⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century, a shift in thought was occurring for many Americans. The people's use of Niagara Falls as an attraction was destroying one of America's treasured natural wonders. Abraham Lincoln gave Yosemite to the state of California in 1864 for use as a wilderness park.³⁰ A legendary evening around the campfire in Yellowstone supposedly birthed the National Park idea around 1870, though most historians now discredit the account as a myth.³¹ Instead, Yellowstone became the first national park in 1872 because Frederick Billings, director and president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, promoted the recreational use of the area as a means of commerce for the Northern Pacific Railroad.³² Under the guise of conservation and preservation, Yellowstone was really a symbol of the Northern Pacific rather than beauty or wilderness.³³ Despite this, authors such as John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson began romanticizing the wilderness in their writings.³⁴ Artists sent their paintings of the American west to Congress to convince them of the need to protect these beautiful places in the untouched western part of

²⁸ Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 1-7.

²⁹ Roderick Frazier Nash, 8-22.

³⁰ Though this may speak more to unifying the nation and reminding Americans of their heritage in the midst of turmoil.

³¹ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), 25, 29-55; Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41-42, 149.

³² Alfred Runte, 29-55; Mark David Spence, 36-37.

³³ Mark David Spence, 37.

³⁴ Edwin Way Teale, ed., *The Wilderness World of John Muir: A Selection from his Collected Works* (New York: Mariner Books, 2001); Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (New York: Signet, 2012); Brooks Atkinson, Editor, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Random House, 2000).

the nation.³⁵ These events laid the foundation for an American awakening to the value of wilderness and the environment, especially once seeming tragedy, to environmentalists, struck in 1908 with the Hetch Hetchy controversy in which the City of San Francisco's leaders chose to dam a beautiful valley in order to provide clean water for residents of nearby San Francisco instead of gaining protection in Yosemite National Park.³⁶ Thus, in 1916, the National Park Service and its mission were officially established.

The National Park Service's mission is as follows:

There is created in the Department of the Interior a service to be called the National Park Service . . . which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. – Organic Act (1916)³⁷

While the National Park Service's mission includes cultural resources, its emphasis is on natural resources. The writers of this piece of legislation named historic objects once.

Whereas, foreshadowing what was to come, natural objects, wild life, and scenery are all included in the Organic Act of 1916's purpose statement. The agency did not have biologists or scientists of any type on staff until after World War II.³⁸ Yet, that does not mean there was not an emphasis on natural resources, the wilderness, or the environment.³⁹ The National Park Service's leaders gave the agency's first interpreters the title "Park Naturalist," signifying an emphasis on nature education. Similarly, it was not until 1933 that the agency

³⁵ Alfred Runte, *National Parks*, 20-22, 33, 38-39; Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 41.

³⁶ Alfred Runte, *National Parks*, 70-73.

³⁷ 16 U.S.C. (1)

³⁸ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 69-70, 149, 164-166.

³⁹ Alfred Runte, *National Parks*; Alston Chase, *Playing God in Yellowstone: The Destruction of America's First National Park* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1987).

managed historic sites such as National Battlefields.⁴⁰ Despite these things, some historians still argue that the National Park Service was not a scientific agency but a tourism agency.⁴¹ Still, there was the idea among those who promoted the establishment of the agency that America's first national parks were "useless" public lands encompassing wilderness as a means of justifying their establishment.⁴² The need to "conserve . . . unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations," laid the foundation for wilderness protection and thus the environmental movement.

The management policies associated with the Organic Act of 1916's mandate affected the narrative the national parks told. As early as the 1920s, park boosters (the group of people involved with the movement to create an eastern national park) working for the creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park were emphasizing natural scenery over cultural resources.⁴³ There was even debate as to whether the Park should be a national park or a national forest due to industrial destruction of the region. Meanwhile, Rachel Carson's classic *Silent Spring*, triggering the environmental movement and the National Environmental Policy Act, was not published until 1962, and the National Environmental Policy Act was not passed until 1970. These facts clearly indicate that environmental protection began much earlier than the environmental movement of the 1960s.

Reacting to the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, Edward Abbey reflects the sentiment that national parks were intended to be wilderness places above all else. Edward Abbey complains of industrial tourism, those who experience the park from their vehicles rather than getting out and physically experiencing the park, and the

⁴⁰ Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*, 111.

⁴¹ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature*.

⁴² Alfred Runte, *National Parks*, 43-73.

⁴³ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 13.

encroachment of the population on the wilderness.⁴⁴ The roads that National Park Service staff built in the middle of the twentieth century opened up new landscapes and took the public farther than they had ever been before. Yet, as Roderick Frazier Nash points out, wilderness is a place without people.⁴⁵ Wilderness theory and Abbey's frustration leaves one wondering, can one experience wilderness at all? Once people are there, is it wilderness? Because of such questions, the National Park Service has to grapple with questions surrounding the possibility of enjoyment of parks, such as Great Smoky Mountains National Park, containing historic districts, such as Elkmont. In short, the National Park Service's administrators now have to address the question of whether enjoyment and preservation are capable of coexisting

This question applies to more than just national parks containing historic districts, given that the national parks are preserving natural landscapes for perpetuity. Some of the policies statically preserving wilderness were detrimental to parks, and some authors prove passionately adamant that wilderness protection policies destroy parks.⁴⁶ For example, some animal populations, such as ungulates, are encouraged if they draw visitors, but other animal populations, such as predators, are hunted and removed from parks if they are considered harmful or do not draw visitors.⁴⁷ The national park experience includes visitors seeing animals but only the correct animals.⁴⁸ This selective population encouragement or reduction led to an unbalanced ecosystem in parks such as Yellowstone.⁴⁹ This begs the questions, is there a perfect ecosystem? Is preservation of the ecosystem actually achievable without

⁴⁴ Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (New York: Touchstone, 1990), xiii-xiv, 39-59.

⁴⁵ Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness*, 2.

⁴⁶ Alston Chase, *Playing God*.

⁴⁷ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 71-72.

⁴⁸ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 70; Alston Chase, *Playing God*, 21.

⁴⁹ Alston Chase, *Playing God*.

destroying it? It also leaves questions surrounding visitation and interpretation if the Park's staff fail to establish a relationship with visitors merely because the visitors do not see what they desire to see in a national park, whether that is the correct animal or the correct type of architecture. These are valid questions whose answers have the potential to threaten the narrative of preservation and enjoyment the National Park Service promises to provide.

According to the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Park Service is required to conduct Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements on all projects involving federal property or funds prior to beginning a given project. Yet, it is the historical legacy of protecting wilderness that threatens cultural resources in the National Park Service. There is a legacy dating back to the 1830s of favoring protection of the nation's natural wonders. The National Park Service, though it now encompasses cultural resources, did not begin with cultural resources as the agency's primary concern. It is necessary to understand this in order to evaluate how National Park Service units possessing national park designations manage and prioritize their resources.

Appalachian Tourism

Just as the environmental movement continues to shape national park management into the present, the introduction of tourism to the Appalachian region alters Appalachian identity and shapes how the National Park Service interprets the people who once inhabited Appalachian national park units. The relationship between tourism and identity plays an important role in Great Smoky Mountains National Park because an important component of management is tourism. Some even argue that the whole objective of national parks is tourism. This brief history of Appalachian identity will demonstrate that what people want is what the Park portrays because that is what brings visitors and money. The identity people

want is not necessarily historically accurate, but it is determining what is historically significant for preservation in the Appalachian region Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The Appalachian mountaineer is often defined with the words, “hillbilly,” “backwards,” “primitive,” “impoverished,” and “illiterate.” People speak of Appalachian residents in a specific way, usually derogatory. The Appalachian image and identity is persistent, something the residents of this region cannot overcome, even in the National Park Service. John Fowler describes how the popular idea that the Appalachian people’s descendance from the refuse of Europe resulted in poor genetics, causing Appalachian residents to be inferior and dependent on others to pull them out of poverty.⁵⁰ The Appalachian identity seems as though it is something that has always been, but it is not. In reality, the Appalachian identity is a new concept that emerged in the years immediately following the Civil War.⁵¹ Prior to that time, Appalachia existed, people knew about it and visited the region for its healing springs, but Appalachia was not a cohesive regional identity.⁵² Brenden Martin claims most people hardly even thought of the area as a region.⁵³ As colorist regional literature emerged, industry and tourism moved into the rural agricultural region and created a vicious cycle as preconceived notions fed the Appalachian identity to the point that it became the only Appalachian identity in living memory.

Following the Civil War, a new literary movement emerged: colorist regional literature. Most authors writing about Appalachian history touch on the literary roots of

⁵⁰ John Fowler, “Appalachia’s Agony: A Historiographical Essay on Modernization and . Development in the Appalachian Region,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 72 (3, 1998): 307.

⁵¹ C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism in the Mountain South: A Double-Edged Sword* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 45.

⁵² C. Brenden Martin, xviii, 17.

⁵³ C. Brenden Martin, 45.

Appalachian identity. Henry Shapiro, Stephen Whitaker, Brenden Martin, and Richard Starnes all discuss colorist literature extensively and point to the isolated experience of Appalachia's wealthy early visitors who became colorist writers.⁵⁴ Martin goes into detail on the authors staying at the widely popular resorts and hotels popping up across the region but never meeting, or only meeting in passing, residents of the region.⁵⁵ Yet, these people would visit the region and write colorful tales of their experiences and the people they met.⁵⁶ Often, as these authors describe, the colorist writers would exaggerate and add flourishes following their initial works because they wrote what their readers wanted rather than the reality of the Appalachian residents.⁵⁷ The American people began to fall in love with these "backward" Appalachian people described in literature. Thus, it is not surprising that some colorist writers, such as Horace Kephart with his book *Our Southern Highlanders*, contributed directly to the tourism industry and the development of additional resorts, national parks, and other tourism attractions.⁵⁸ William Goodell Frost encapsulated the charm the image of the "backward" Appalachian residents held when he described "our contemporary ancestor" in 1899.⁵⁹ There, in the southern Appalachian mountains, were people who sounded as though

⁵⁴ Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Stephen Whitaker, "A New Wave of Colonization: The Economics of the Tourism and Travel Industry in Appalachian Kentucky," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 6 (1/2, 2000): 35-48; C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*; Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009).

⁵⁵ C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*, xv.

⁵⁶ C. Brenden Martin, 47-57; Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders* (1913; repr., Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000), 79-83.

⁵⁷ C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*, 47-57; Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*, 79-83.

⁵⁸ Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders*; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 53.

⁵⁹ William Goodell Frost quoted by Ted Ownby, "Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen, but Does Anyone Want to Hear about Them When They're on Vacation?" in *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, and Culture in the Modern South*, ed. Richard D. Starnes (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 242-243.

they were in Elizabethan England and lived lives devoid of modern progress.⁶⁰ Those outside the region wanted to help or to see these primitive people; it was like seeing their past in the present.⁶¹ It did not help that people like Horace Kephart lived among residents of present-day Great Smoky Mountains National Park and reiterated such claims in his own works by referring to the region as containing isolated backward communities in a predominantly unsettled area.⁶² Horace Kephart likely derived his misrepresentation of the area from his higher education and lack of a familial network in the region. John Fowler calls the subsequent portrayal of Appalachian identity the antithesis of the American dream.⁶³ The Appalachian people did not have to accept the image or the narrative placed upon them. It came from outsiders who did not know them or understand their way of life, but they responded the best way they knew how, through the lens of their own experience, and as time went on, industry and tourism reinforced the identity initially created by colorist literature.⁶⁴

As the Appalachian people were interpreting visitors and new industries through the lens of their own experience, the rest of the nation was doing the same thing with Appalachia. Colorist literature confronted America with the image of a backward people in the heart of the Appalachian mountains, something they only understood from their concept of progress: industrialization. According to Ronald Eller, poverty and backwardness was evidence of a lack of progress, and lack of progress is lack of industry.⁶⁵ Thus, Eller argues, the industrialized regions of American believed that if industry entered the Appalachian

⁶⁰ Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders*, 321-322, 361.

⁶¹ Horace Kephart, 321-322.

⁶² Horace Kephart, 35, 452.

⁶³ John Fowler, "Appalachia's Agony," 305.

⁶⁴ Robert Weise, *Grasping at Independence* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 7-8.

⁶⁵ Ronald Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachian since 1945* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013), 1-2.

region, progress would follow, and the people's backwardness could be resolved.⁶⁶ This is why, as John Fowler points out, government agencies operated under the assumption that the Appalachian region could not help themselves: only if exterior agents intervened and modernized the people could they help themselves.⁶⁷

The political and economic response to this need for help was in response to a *perceived* backwardness. By bringing progress and modernization to the region through the means of federal assistance and industry, such as mining, logging, textile mills, and tourism, Appalachia's "problems" might be resolved.⁶⁸ Instead, they just came, and by coming, industry brought problems with it.⁶⁹ The industry transformed the region of virgin forests and denuded the Appalachian mountainside.⁷⁰ It took away the Appalachians' agriculture, and it left destruction in its wake.⁷¹ Like any resource dependent industry, the logging and mining companies packed up and left when they ran out of resources.⁷² Poverty was what they left behind.⁷³

Suddenly, Appalachia was the story of American progress, according to Ronald Eller.⁷⁴ In *Uneven Ground*, Eller argues that Appalachia is a reflection of America's progress and national industry, except it was the antithesis of the American Dream.⁷⁵ Eller describes Appalachia as the "Other America."⁷⁶ Sure, they had industry, but the industry did not help

⁶⁶ Ronald Eller, 2.

⁶⁷ John Fowler, "Appalachia's Agony," 312-313.

⁶⁸ Ronald Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 5.

⁶⁹ Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 3.

⁷⁰ Ronald L. Lewis, 3.

⁷¹ Ronald L. Lewis, 3-14.

⁷² Ronald L. Lewis.

⁷³ Ronald L. Lewis, 3-14.

⁷⁴ Ronald Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachian since 1945* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013), 3.

⁷⁵ Ronald Eller, 3.

⁷⁶ Ronald Eller, 3.

their poverty. Industry only reinforced Appalachian poverty, so Appalachia became America's scapegoat.⁷⁷ It represented what they were not.⁷⁸ The region had to exist for the rest of America to be successful, so Appalachia drew the American public to itself like flames draw moths. The American people who gawk at the Appalachian people could marvel at how far they themselves had come since by looking at Appalachia, they were looking at the primitive and uncivilized past.

Resource-exploitive industries left poverty in their wake, but the flipside of the coin is another exploitive industry: tourism. Unlike logging or mining, tourism is an industry that exploits intangibles. It exploits the region's identity and heritage, so as some industries came to the region to exploit and to "help Appalachia," another industry was born out of people's attraction to the region.⁷⁹ The modern and industrialized American people wanted to see what the colorist writers were talking about, they wanted to see their antithesis. Ironically, the antithesis of industrialized, progressive America is not what the tourism industry portrays in Appalachia. Brenden Martin points out that the tourism image of the region is pristine wilderness, not the denuded landscape reflecting progress.⁸⁰ Yet, the pristine wilderness still carries connotations of isolation, hence the impression of backwardness. Tourism merely chooses a subtle route to impose ideas of progress and identity on the Appalachian people and region, though not in all cases as is clear with the hillbilly image.⁸¹ Given the nuances of

⁷⁷ Ronald Eller, 3.

⁷⁸ Ronald Eller, 3.

⁷⁹ Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming*; C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*.

⁸⁰ C. Brenden Martin, 65-80.

⁸¹ C. Brenden Martin; Daniel Pierce, "The Barbarism of the Huns: Family and Community Removal in the Establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 57 (4, 1998): 62-79; Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land*.

this identity, it begs the question: are visitors attracted to the scapegoat or the exotic? Either way, people love to see what they do not have at home.⁸²

The Appalachian people did not have to accept the identity impressed upon them by outsiders, but, as Robert Weise argues in his book about industry in eastern Kentucky, the Appalachian people interpreted and responded to the newcomers through the lens of what they already knew and understood of the world prior to industry's introduction to the agrorural region.⁸³ Because tourism is also an industry, the same argument Weise makes applies to the Appalachian response to the tourism industry, colorist literature, and the identity associated with those things. Prior to the introduction of industry, the Appalachian people operated in a sustenance economy where the threat of debt and poverty was persistent, so the people responded to an opportunity for cash to alleviate existing debts or to prepare for debts looming on the horizon.⁸⁴ The opportunity for cash and a boost to the economy led the Appalachian people to engage in a love hate relationship with tourism.⁸⁵ They hated turning themselves into an attraction, but they loved the acquisition of cash.⁸⁶ Thus, in the context of their world, if Weise's argument is accepted, rejecting the tourism industry and the affiliated Appalachian identity was not truly an option for the Appalachian people.

The acceptance of tourism meant the creation of an "official" history to please and draw visitors to the region.⁸⁷ The industry required marketing and a constant flow of people, so the Appalachian people had to market themselves as the people visitors expected. The

⁸² Ted Ownby in Richard D. Starnes, Ed., *Southern Journeys*.

⁸³ Robert Weise, *Grasping*, 7-8.

⁸⁴ Robert Weise, *Grasping*, 7-8.

⁸⁵ Stephen Whitaker, "A New Wave of Colonization: The Economics of the Tourism and Travel Industry in Appalachian Kentucky," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 6 (1/2, 2000): 38.

⁸⁶ Stephen Whitaker, 38.

⁸⁷ Stephen Whitaker, 38.

Appalachian people were making their region “sellable.”⁸⁸ Thus, the tourism industry exploited their identity and heritage, and a narrative that historically did not exist became standard. It was manipulation, construction, or reconstruction of heritage depending on the location. Furthermore, this acceptance of tourism did more than strip the Appalachian people of their identity; like other industries, tourism did little to benefit the region.⁸⁹ It paid little and work was seasonal.⁹⁰ Furthermore, communities outside the region of poverty received the profit.⁹¹

Industry exploited resources and left communities in poverty, but tourism did more than construct identity, exploit heritage, and pay little, it also exploited the people themselves. Daniel Pierce discusses the fictionalization of the life of mountaineers and how park boosters at Great Smoky Mountains National Park downplayed the presence of people living in the mountains.⁹² It was a wilderness. The population was low. Only a few people had to move when legislators created the Park, and they did so willingly. The narrative was that of “our contemporary ancestor,” meaning the American people’s ancestors were living in the then present. Park staff preserved “primitive” log buildings in the Park to illustrate the traditional Appalachian colorist literature identity. Pierce lists publication upon publication of Park histories adhering to this myth and written well into the twentieth century in order to draw tourists to the region.⁹³ Perhaps the worst of it was not the perpetuation of the myth but the Park’s management putting mountain residents on display as visitors were encouraged to visit the basket-making Walker sisters in Little Greenbrier as living examples of the

⁸⁸ Stephen Whitaker, 35-48.

⁸⁹ Stephen Whitaker, 46-48.

⁹⁰ C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*, xiv.

⁹¹ Stephen Whitaker, “A New Wave of Colonization,” 43-44.

⁹² Daniel Pierce, “The Barbarism of the Huns,” 64-66.

⁹³ Daniel Pierce, 62-79.

Appalachian mountaineer.⁹⁴ The tourism industry and the Park's staff exploited the people themselves, and the people became the attraction. Just as the early colorist writers had preconceived notions of the region, so modern tourists have preconceived notions of the region creating a vicious cycle in which expectation informs identity and identity informs expectation.⁹⁵

The Appalachian identity ultimately exists because of collective memory reinforced by industry and tourism. Andrew Denson illustrates well how collective memory and identity formation works in philanthropic ventures.⁹⁶ When Knoxville schoolchildren set out to raise funds and make a monument for the Eastern Band of Cherokee, the Knoxville schoolchildren intended the monument to be for the benefit of the Cherokee people, but as adults became involved, the designers of the monument depicted the Cherokee as the adults, not children, expected the portrayal of Native Americans.⁹⁷ James Mooney's folk tales of the Cherokee turned into fact, something he likely never intended.⁹⁸ Worst of all, the monument never made it to Cherokee because the Knoxville school children could not, and may never, travel to Cherokee to see the gift originally intended for the Cherokee children.⁹⁹ The fruit of the children's labors would amount to nothing, so the people of east Tennessee forgot the Cherokee as the Cherokee monument metaphorically became a monument to the children of Knoxville with its placement in Gatlinburg.¹⁰⁰ Maybe, then, Appalachian identity tells just as much about the people who created it as it does those whom it represents.

⁹⁴ Daniel Pierce, 74.

⁹⁵ Stephen Whitaker, "A New Wave of Colonization," 36.

⁹⁶ Andrew Denson, "Gatlinburg's Cherokee Monument: Public Memory in the Shadow of a National Park," *Appalachian Journal* 37 (Fall 2009/Winter 2010): 28-43.

⁹⁷ Andrew Denson, 36-37.

⁹⁸ Andrew Denson, 31.

⁹⁹ Andrew Denson, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Denson, 39-41.

The Appalachian people may have been sustenance farmers in a rural agricultural society, but their identity as commonly understood finds its roots in the modern era following the Civil War when colorist literary writers, outsiders, established a mythical romanticized version of the southern Appalachian region based on little to no factual evidence. Unfortunately for the Appalachian people, it produced a static escapist fictional image of their existence.¹⁰¹ The rest of America perceived their differences with Appalachia as problems and lack of progress within the Appalachian region, so these outsider Americans attempted to impose their “solutions” on the region.¹⁰² The question has always been about what Appalachia can gain from the outside world rather than about Appalachia’s real needs.¹⁰³ This imposition has ultimately led to a vicious cycle in which a fictional identity emerged, industry and tourism swept in reinforcing the identity, the identity again informed the industry and tourism, which in turned informed the identity yet again. It is a never-ending cycle trapping the Appalachians into a fictional historic narrative, though enough time has now passed to suggest this narrative of identity acquisition and cycle is the valid new Appalachian historic identity. By the same token, as Appalachia continues to struggle, maybe it is time to ask if tourism is the best economic choice, and what the real cause of Appalachia’s struggles is.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of whether or not this is the case, understanding this past and creation of Appalachian identity is necessary to comprehend why Great Smoky Mountains National Park elected to preserve log structures throughout the Park while failing to consider other forms of historically significant architecture.

¹⁰¹ Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming*, 1-2.

¹⁰² Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming*, 2.

¹⁰³ John Fowler, “Appalachia’s Agony,” 314.

¹⁰⁴ C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*, 195-196; Stephen Whitaker, “A New Wave of Colonization,” 46-47; John Fowler, “Appalachia’s Agony,” 327-328. Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land*, 184-191.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Legislators signed the enabling legislation for Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1926, Congress established Great Smokies in 1934, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt dedicated the Park in 1940.¹⁰⁵ However, the *idea* of Great Smoky Mountains National Park began long before those dates.¹⁰⁶ The idea of the Park first emerged in the 1890s, not from Tennessee, where Park Headquarters is currently located, but from North Carolina.¹⁰⁷ This is important not so much because of the role North Carolina played in Elkmont's story but because the North Carolinians' idea eventually came to pass.

One of the reasons North Carolinians proposed the idea of an Appalachian national park in Great Smoky Mountains is due to the democratic nature of national parks. Many people proposed that national parks were monuments to the nation's heritage.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, the national parks were for all people. Southerners, reeling from the Civil War, wanted their share in the nation's heritage since they were Americans, after all. Daniel Pierce excellently explains this stance and describes how North Carolina leaders began asking why the South had not yet acquired a national park; they too had magnificent scenery in the southern mountain region.¹⁰⁹ North Carolina leaders suggested that a national park in the South had the potential to symbolize reconciliation between the South and the rest of the

¹⁰⁵ 16 U.S.C. (403); "Smoky Mountain Timeline," Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated July 1, 2015, accessed November 2, 2017,

<https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/historyculture/timeline.htm>; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 151.

¹⁰⁶ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 1-30; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Pierce, 40.

¹⁰⁸ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), 57-73.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 37-42.

nation following the Civil War.¹¹⁰ It was a milestone indicating a broken relationship that had healed. If the parks were democratic then every region deserved one, even the South.¹¹¹

The National Park Service was certainly going to bring the idea of democracy to fulfillment regardless of whether or not reconciliation came to fruition. However, there was another idea the North Carolinians were tossing around during the first movement for Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the 1890s that continues to influence the Park to this day: the idea of tourism. The majority of the first Park promoters were Ashevilleians who wished to promote tourism in western North Carolina for the economic benefit of their city.¹¹²

Asheville missed out as it never became a gateway community for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and some authors argue that by the time Great Smoky Mountains National Park and its adjoining Blue Ridge Parkway were established, it was too late for Asheville's economy since it began to decline by 1930 and was still feeling the effects of its economic downturn into the 1970s.¹¹³ Despite this, tourism did become the industry of Gatlinburg and Cherokee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park's gateway communities, and it played a prominent role in the successful movement for an Appalachian national park at Great Smoky Mountains in the 1920s.¹¹⁴

Prior to the movement for Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the 1920s, there were two groups particularly interested in tourism: Ashevilleians and Knoxvilleians.¹¹⁵ The Ashevilleians wanted to promote the tourism industry in their region.¹¹⁶ The Knoxvilleians

¹¹⁰ Daniel Pierce, 41.

¹¹¹ Daniel Pierce, 41.

¹¹² Anne Whisnant, *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 26-28; Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky*, 62-63.

¹¹³ Anne Whisnant, *Super-Scenic Motorway*, 78.

¹¹⁴ Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky*, 120.

¹¹⁵ Natives of Asheville, NC and natives of Knoxville, TN.

¹¹⁶ Anne Whisnant, *Super-Scenic Motorway*, 26-28.

were grasping for their position in the New South, and in a newly industrialized city, they were hoping to establish a lifestyle similar to that of the industrial barons of the North who found refuge in the mountainous region of North Carolina.¹¹⁷ Yet, the Knoxvilleians were not Carnegies, Vanderbilts, or Rockefellers. They were not welcome at the resorts in North Carolina: they were of a lower socioeconomic status.

The lower socioeconomic status mattered little to the Knoxvilleians. They had access to their own resources, and the new idea of “roughing it” fascinated the Knoxvilleians.¹¹⁸ Their desire to get away from the city and enjoy the luxury of the countryside ran deeper than the healing nature of mountain air and hot springs found in western North Carolina and enjoyed by the northern industrial barons. The Knoxvilleians were capable of creating their own place in the world.

Carlos Campbell argues in *Birth of a National Park* that the North Carolina movement for Great Smoky Mountains National Park was unimportant because it was a failed movement overshadowed by Tennessee’s successful 1920s Park Movement.¹¹⁹ Perhaps he is correct in part, but the movement of the 1890s laid the foundation for the successful Park Movement of the 1920s. Concurrent with the North Carolinians’ promotion of a national park as a democratic and economic endeavor, the 1890s brought commercialized logging to the Smokies, the southern Appalachian resort movement was taking off as hotels

¹¹⁷ Jessica McCausland, “Galyon Family Biographical Sketch,” Cultural Resources Division, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, National Park Service, August 2015; Jessica McCausland, “Briscoe Family Biographical Sketch,” Cultural Resources Division, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, National Park Service, August 2015; Jessica McCausland, “Kennedy Family Biographical Sketch,” Cultural Resources Division, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, National Park Service, August 2015; Jessica McCausland, “House Family Biographical Sketch,” Cultural Resources Division, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, National Park Service, August 2015; Jessica McCausland, “Lot 16 Cottage 10 Biographical Sketch,” Cultural Resources Division, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, National Park Service, August 2015.

¹¹⁸ Mark T. Banker, *Appalachians All: East Tennesseans and the Elusive History of an American Region*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 154.

¹¹⁹ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 12-13.

and resorts popped up all over the hillsides, and literary promoters such as Horace Kephart were moving into the southern Appalachian region.¹²⁰ The beauty of the Smokies and its economic potential were drawing the American people to the region. Ironically, it meant commercial loggers stripped the natural resources providing said beauty from the hillsides, depleting the area of both its aesthetic and economic potential.

Little River Lumber Company dominated Tennessee beginning in 1900 while Champion Fibre Company opened a mill in North Carolina in 1905, just to name two of the better known lumber companies.¹²¹ The lumber companies denuded the mountains and left them bare. Meanwhile, the owners of these companies were more interested in making a profit than in exclusively extracting lumber. Thus, Colonel Townsend, President of Little River Lumber Company, offered day excursions into the beautiful mountains beginning in 1909.¹²² He eventually recognized the opportunity to profit from the popular southern Appalachian resort movement taking over the South, and he deeded land to a group of businesspersons from Knoxville for the establishment of the Appalachian Club just outside of the Little River Lumber Company's basecamp, Elkmont town, in 1910.¹²³ The members of

¹²⁰ C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism*, 43-63; Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P."

¹²¹ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 26; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, 2009, 10, Appendix B, Table 2.

¹²² Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," Section 8 Page 6; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 33; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 11.

¹²³ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, Section 8 Page 6.; Daniel Pierce, 33; John Morrell, "A History of the Cottages in the Vicinity of the Former Town of Elkmont, Namely: The Appalachian Club and the Wonderland Club," September 2, 1976, 2, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 11.

this Club and the Wonderland Club that followed in 1915 became part of the Park Movement by the 1920s.¹²⁴

In 1923, Ann Davis, a member of the Wonderland Club and wife of Knoxville leader Willis P. Davis, asked why Great Smokies could not be a national park as its beauty rivaled that of the western national parks.¹²⁵ What followed was the Park Movement. This movement took 17 years to bring the Park to completion, and most authors emphasize environmental protection and promotion of tourism when describing this movement.¹²⁶ The people involved with the movement called themselves park boosters and were in positions of influence.¹²⁷ Many people were wealthy and from Knoxville or Nashville, though the group known as park boosters included people from across the eastern United States and included a number of legislators or Congresspeople in addition to the nation's business leaders.¹²⁸ Many of the Club members at the Appalachian Club and Wonderland Club in Elkmont were park boosters, though there was controversy among them as early as 1923 and as late as 1927.¹²⁹ Most Club members and property owners were park boosters until they realized that eminent domain would affect their own property at Elkmont.¹³⁰ Upon this realization, some Elkmont residents supported a National Forest instead, especially since commercial logging

¹²⁴ Daniel Pierce, 79, 86; Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*, 87 -89, 93.

¹²⁵ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 13.

¹²⁶ Carlos C. Campbell; Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*; Laura Thornborough, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, Rev. ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1956).

¹²⁷ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 18-23, 33-35; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 79, 86; Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*, 87 -89, 93.

¹²⁸ Carlos C. Campbell, 18-23, 33-35, 40-41, 47-48, 59-67.

¹²⁹ Carlos C. Campbell, 32, 52-53; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 79, 86; Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*, 87 -89, 93.

¹³⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 168.

companies had already destroyed the “beautiful Smokies.”¹³¹ National parks are supposed to protect what pristine wilderness remains in the nation, anyway.¹³² In the end, the national park idea won because it best promoted tourism and enjoyment of the region. Thus, in 1926, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park’s enabling legislation was signed. The document stated the Park’s purpose as being “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”¹³³ The state and national leaders did not establish the Smokies for scientific or monumental reasons. Rather, they established the Smokies for the people’s enjoyment as the beautiful place they imagined it could be or might have once been, purely aesthetic and economic reasons foreshadowed by the first national Park Movement that emerged in North Carolina in the 1890s. These reasons for Park establishment ultimately determined all management decisions that followed the Park’s establishment, including the preservation and interpretation of Elkmont Historic District.

Interpretation in NPS

Finally, when discussing interpretation and historic preservation in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, it is necessary to discuss interpretation and its purposes. Many people think of linguistic interpretation when the word interpretation comes up in conversation. Often, the audience requires a brief discussion or definition before moving forward in the conversation. The National Park Service defines interpretation as “a catalyst in creating opportunities for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance inherent in the resource.”¹³⁴ There is no

¹³¹ Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East*, 87 -92; Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 45-47.

¹³² Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 104.

¹³³ 16 U.S.C. (403).

¹³⁴ “About Interpretation,” Interpretive Development Program, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://idp.eppley.org/about-interpretation>.

statement about the activity or mode of interpretation requiring the act of interpreting to take on a specific form. Interpretation, according to the National Park Service, is about taking advantage of opportunities to create connections between visitors and resources. The important point, then, is to either create the opportunity or to communicate with the visitor where they are in such a way that the Park's staff may capture the visitor's attention.

Similarly, the National Association of Interpretation emphasizes communication in their definition by saying interpretation is "a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource."¹³⁵ Freeman Tilden, often called "the father of interpretation," defined interpretation as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, or by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."¹³⁶ According to him, interpretation requires a bit more than communication because visitors need tangibles, or, in Tilden's words, "original objects, . . . firsthand experience, or . . . illustrative media."¹³⁷ Thus, preservation of historic buildings is vital to the interpretation of cultural resources to visitors.

In addition to these definitions, the Smokies' own policies on interpretation guide both the interpretation and management of cultural resources within the boundaries of the Park. The Park's 1982 *General Management Plan* asserted the interpretive policy and informational services provided directly correlated to visitor use, making the Park's policy on

¹³⁵ "What is Interpretation?" National Association for Interpretation, accessed October 26, 2017, http://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/About/About_Interpretation/nai/_About/what_is_interp.aspx?hkey=53b0bfb4-74a6-4cfc-8379-1d55847c2cb9.

¹³⁶ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 17.

¹³⁷ Freeman Tilden, 17.

interpretation vital to the Park's fulfilment of its purpose, as well. The document further states that "supreme sanctuary . . . [is] the underlying theme of the park," and emphasizes delicate ecosystems, historic cabins, the Cherokee Indian, and the Appalachian mountaineer.¹³⁸ The authors of the 1982 *General Management Plan* were wise to acknowledge that the Park was not a pristine wilderness despite their emphasis on isolation and sanctuary.¹³⁹ Thus, the authors state, "The highest purpose of the park's interpretive efforts is believed to be a demonstration of how it is preserved as a sanctuary from some of the effects of the modern technological world and how its special qualities can relate to—and benefit—the people of that world."¹⁴⁰ The document also states, "Subthemes that will be presented are wilderness, ecology, aspects of each of the natural sciences, and the role of endangered plants and animals. Indian occupancy and the settlements, agriculture, and culture of mountaineers also will be subjects for interpretation."¹⁴¹ Modes of interpretation include museums, information desks, "illustrated talks, guided nature walks, bicycle tours, horseback rides, and hayrides with ranger-naturalists, . . . self-guiding nature trails, numerous roadside and trailside exhibits, the Cades Cove and Roaring Fork interpretive roads, and several AM radio transmitters" in addition to Park publications.¹⁴² In short, the Park's policy on interpretation governs all information transmission among visitors and takes on many forms in order to accommodate the many needs and interests of the Park's visitors.

The Smokies staff never intended the 1982 *General Management Plan* to be permanent. In 2010, Park staff amended the 1982 *General Management Plan* to include the

¹³⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *General Management Plan*, 1982, 31.

¹³⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 31.

¹⁴⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 32.

¹⁴¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 32.

¹⁴² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 33.

preservation and interpretation of the Elkmont Historic District. By 2016, the Park staff replaced the 1982 *General Management Plan* and put a *Foundation Document* into place.¹⁴³ The interpretation policy presented in the 2016 *Foundation Document* is what currently guides interpretation in Great Smokies. This document states that “[i]nterpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park – they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. . . [they] go beyond a mere description of the event or process to foster multiple opportunities to experience and consider the park and its resources.”¹⁴⁴ The themes presented by the 2016 *Foundation Document* are diversity and abundance, continuum of human heritage, scenic beauty, visitor experience and engagement, and caring for the gift (of the Park).¹⁴⁵ The authors of the document provide each of these themes with a paragraph-long description, and any interpretive material offered to the public must align with one of these themes. Though there are fewer themes than the 1982 *General Management Plan*, and this document does not discuss modes of interpretation, the 2016 *Foundation Document* allows for greater flexibility in determining what the Park staff may or may not interpret and how that interpretation may occur.

Overall, it is necessary to know the popular definitions of interpretation as well as past and current Park policy on interpretation prior to evaluating a Park’s interpretation and management of a historic district. Because interpretation is about communication and

¹⁴³ It is important to note here that the purpose of the *Foundation Document* is to guide future management decisions for Great Smoky Mountains National Park not to lay out specific management strategies or actions. See: “Foundation Document for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” PEPC Planning, Environment & Public Comment, National Park Service, accessed November 8, 2017, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=59825>.

¹⁴⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Foundation Document*, 2016, 9.

¹⁴⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 9-10.

facilitating visitor connections to Park resources, it is vital to know the Park's policy on interpretation, both ideologically and practically speaking. The Park's policy on interpretation directly correlates to what the Park's administrators choose to preserve and promote. Thus, interpretation definition and policy also determines visitor accessibility to Park resources. These definitions and policies are then vital to present prior to evaluating how well the Park interprets and manages its cultural resources since those definitions and policies determine what the Park's staff will interpret and how they will interpret it.

Conclusion

No community's history occurs in a vacuum. Many regional and national narratives intersect to make even the stories of small communities relevant. For Elkmont Historic District, these intersecting narratives include the environmental movement, the rise of southern Appalachian tourism, the movement to create Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the many definitions of interpretation. Elkmont Historic District may have the simple of a small mountain community, but the national and regional narratives surrounding it add substance, complexity, and significance to its own story that has the potential to benefit the public visiting Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Furthermore, these intersecting narratives enable the possibility of assessing how and why the Park's administrators have chosen to manage Elkmont Historic District over the years.

Chapter 2

Elkmont: The Official Narrative

Driving down the twisting and curving Little River Road from the Townsend, Tennessee entrance of Great Smoky Mountains National Park towards the westerly Gatlinburg entrance to the Park, the visitors are unaware that they are traversing an historic path into the mountains. There are no signs indicating the history of the road they travel. The road passes through dense forest and curves with the Little River. Roll down the windows and breathe in the fresh mountain air filled with the scent of water and mossy stones and trees. The colors change depending on the season, but I will assume it is summer, the same time of year most Elkmont occupants filled their cabins at two southern Appalachian resorts. A deep green dominates the scene containing trees and a thick understory. The sky is blue if you can catch a glimpse through the dense canopy. Pink, purple, white, red, and yellow wildflowers brighten the roadside. Then, there is a sign pointing towards Elkmont. The sign does not indicate that Elkmont is a historic site within the Park, just as no one notified the visitor that the road they travel is historic. The only things the sign indicates is the name of the place and the presence of a campground, likely with no vacancy, and a ranger station. The stage is set for the story to unfold as the Park's staff wished visitors to hear it, a story where wilderness takes precedence and cultural history is brushed aside.

The road from Townsend, Tennessee, to the Elkmont Historic District lies directly above the railroad bed that led from the Elkmont logging camp, present-day Elkmont Campground, to the Little River Lumber Company's lumber mill in Townsend, Tennessee.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Vic Weals, *Last Train to Elkmont: A Look Back at Life on Little River in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville, TN: Olden Press, 1991), 85-88.

The interpretive panels at Elkmont Historic District do not provide the visitor with this information, though they do admit the Park's intent was for visitors to remain focused on the natural scenery of the Park rather than the history of the Park. This is made clear when the "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club" interpretive panel placed near the parking area for the Little River trailhead explicitly states, "The park's 1982 *General Management Plan* calls for all structures to be removed upon expiration of leases and the area to be returned to a natural historic state."¹⁴⁷ Thus, the visitor drives along a historic road with a story all its own and stumbles across 84 "abandoned" structures.¹⁴⁸

For many years, the Park refrained from telling the story of the structures in the Elkmont Historic District, even after the structures surpassed the 50-year mark, enabling eligibility for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁴⁹ The interpretive

¹⁴⁷ "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Note: Numbers vary depending on the document or report due to deterioration and removal of buildings over the years; Eleanor Dickinson, "Elkmont Community Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Appalachian Club, January 30, 1993; Austin Coop, "Tour the creepy abandoned building of the Elkmont Historic District," Destination Strange, Roadtrippers, October 2, 2014, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://roadtrippers.com/stories/elkmont-historic-district>; Ashley Hubbard, "The Sad History of the Elkmont Ghost Town and Why You should Visit Before it's Gone," A Southern Gypsy, April 15, 2017, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://asoutherngypsy.com/elkmont-ghost-town/>; Ashley Hubbard, "Finding the Abandoned Wonderland in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," A Southern Gypsy, July 8, 2016, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://asoutherngypsy.com/abandoned-wonderland-smoky-mountains-national-park/>; "Elkmont Ghost Town of the Great Smoky Mountains," TheGreatSmokies.net, September 7, 2012, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.thegreatsmokies.net/elkmont-ghost-town-great-smoky-mountains/>; "Elkmont Ghost Town," Trip Advisor, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g143031-d8426768-Reviews-Elkmont_Ghost_Town-Great_Smoky_Mountains_National_Park_Tennessee.html; "Elkmont," Ghosttowns.com, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/tn/elkmont.html>.

¹⁴⁹ The National Register has a 50 year guideline for listing properties. This guideline states that most buildings must be 50 years old in order to be listed on the National Register. There are exceptions to this guideline, though extra explanation is required in order for buildings less than 50 years old to be listed on the National Register. It is worth noting here that while a few of the buildings were as little as 55-59 years old, many of the buildings were older with some of the buildings contained within Elkmont Historic District pushing 80 years old in 1993 when the Historic District was placed on the National Register.

panel's statement citing the 1982 *General Management Plan* refers to Park policy that directly influenced both the interpretation and the preservation of these sites. This policy enabled the Park's management to avoid nomination of these buildings to the National Register of Historic Places for many years. According to the 1982 *General Management Plan*, the Park was under no obligation to preserve or interpret these buildings *because of the Park's interpretive themes*.¹⁵⁰ In 1993, everything changed when two separate entities nominated the Elkmont Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places, and the Keeper of the Register subsequently designated the buildings as a Historic District.¹⁵¹ Suddenly, Park management could neither follow through on its official policy of removing the structures nor interpret the buildings, a vital part of preservation, because while the National Register of Historic Places prevented removal of the buildings, the 1982 *General Management Plan* prevented their interpretation. Freeman Tilden, argues for the importance of the relationship between preservation and interpretation when he says, "the fruits of adequate interpretation is the certainty that it leads directly toward the very preservation of the treasure itself . . . such a result may be the most important end of our interpretation, for what we cannot protect we are destined to lose"¹⁵²

The dilemma created by Elkmont Historic District's listing on the National Register of Historic Places led to a reevaluation of the Historic District. This had lasting effects on both historic preservation and interpretation in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Through the process of reevaluating the management of Elkmont Historic District, a project

¹⁵⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1982; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, 2009.

¹⁵¹ Eleanor Dickinson, "Elkmont Community Historic District."

¹⁵² Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 65.

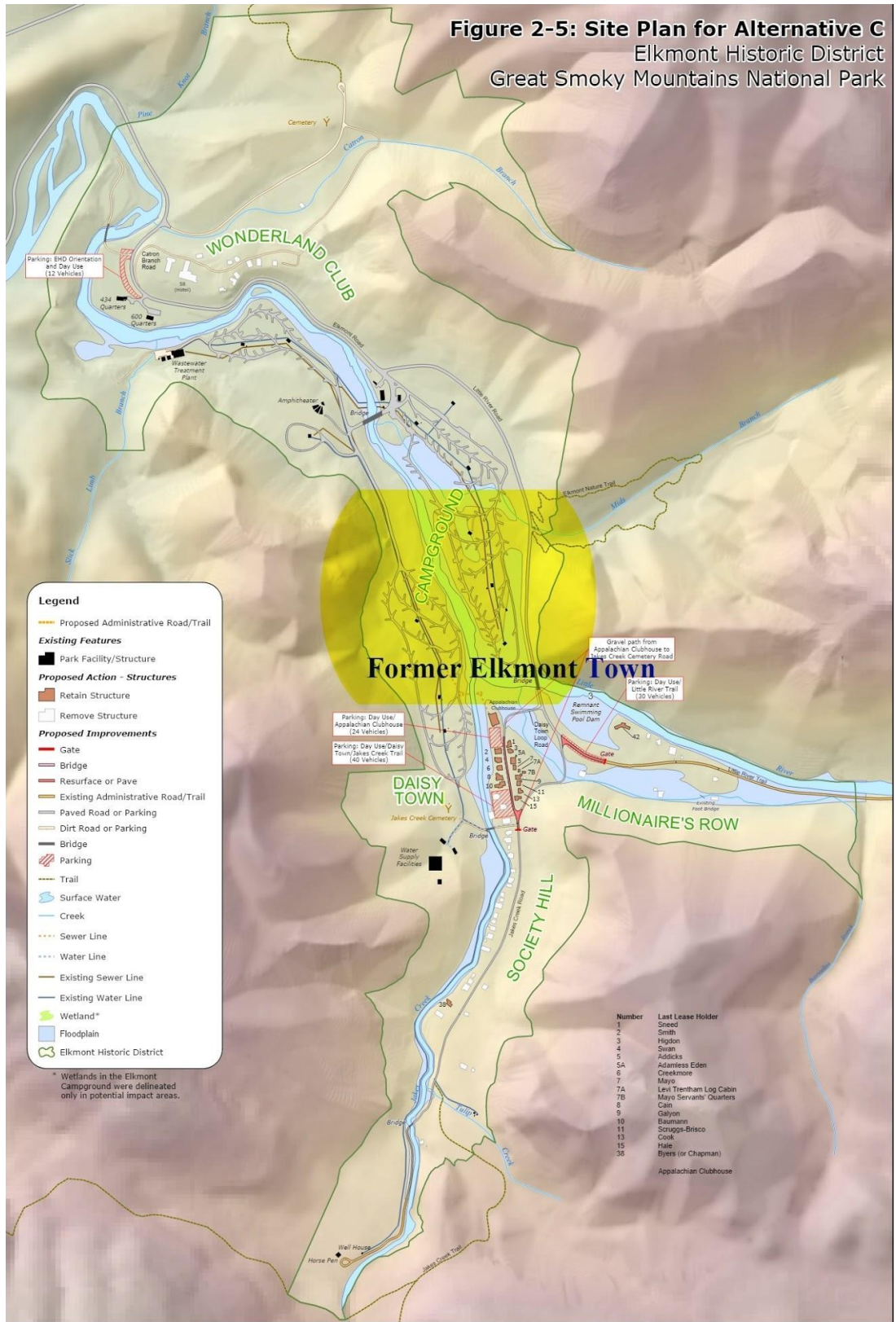
that took place from 2000 to 2009, the Park’s management created an official narrative that aligned with a management plan. The narrative they produced first reflected an amended 1982 *General Management Plan* and later a 2016 *Foundation Document*. What follows is the story of Elkmont, the Park’s management of Elkmont, and its interpretation.

Elkmont Historic District

In compliance with environmental and cultural laws, the Park is required to conduct a study on the affected environment when establishing and implementing a management plan at Elkmont Historic District, or any site containing significant cultural or natural resources, for that matter.

Next Page Figure 1. Present-day map of Elkmont Historic District. This map is the most recent map that most accurately reflects Elkmont Historic District as of October 2017. “Figure 2-5: Site Plan for Alternative C, Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains National Park” US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, 2009, 75, edited to include yellow highlighting and text “Former Elkmont Town” by Jessica McCausland.

Figure 2-5: Site Plan for Alternative C
 Elkmont Historic District
 Great Smoky Mountains National Park



Elkmont Tenn. in the early 1920's

- . The first house William Parton, lived in 1917.
- . Carl and Iota lived here in 1926 before Hayes was born.
- 1. Second house William Parton, lived in until 1928.
- 2. Carl and Iota lived here when Hayes Lyle was born 11-7-1926.
- 3. Jake's Creek Cemetery.
- 4. Appalachian Club Rail Road Station.
- 5. Appalachian Club Hotel.
- 6. Recreation and Ball Park.
- 7. New School where Ora Ownby, and Edward Parton, Attended.
- 8. Baptist Church.
- 9. Old School where Iota Parton, Attended.
- 10. Last house Robert Ownby, lived in at Elkmont.
- 11. Machine Shop.
- 12. Elkmont Hotel.
- 13. Elkmont General Store and Post Office.
- 14. Second house Carl and Iota lived in James Carl was born here 5-11-1925.
- 15. First house Carl and Iota lived in after they was married 7-5-1924.
- 16. Robert Ownby, lived here when Carl and Iota was married in 7-5-1924.
- 17. Wonderland Park Hotel.
- 18. Wonderland Park Railroad Station.
- 19. Boy's Scout Camp.
- 20. This is where Robert Ownby, lived when he paid dog tax on Turk, 9-17-1920 and where we had Typhoid Fever.
- 21. Mitchel and aunt Polly Ownby, lived here in 1920
- 22. Hubert Parton, lived here. This is where Carl and Iota spent their first night together after they was married 7-5-1924.
- 23. Old Elkmont Cemetery.
- 24. This is where they turned the train around they called this a "Y".
- 25. Appalachian Club Swimming Pool.

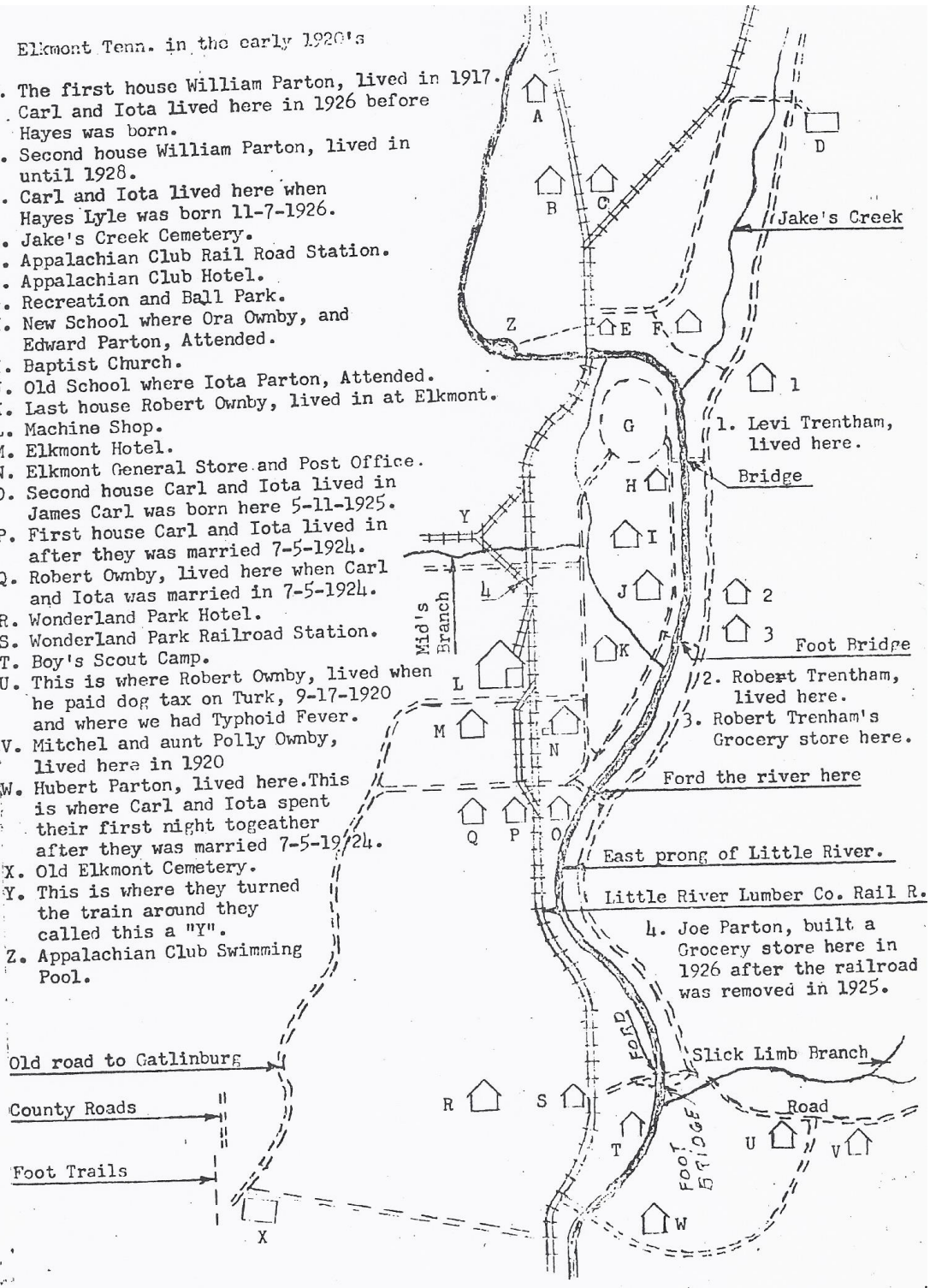


Figure 2. Map of Elkmont, Tennessee in early 1920s. "Elkmont Tenn. In early 1920's," Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives.

As part of the *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment* study, the section titled “Cultural Resources” addresses the cultural history and resources of the Elkmont Historic District. Included is a history of the environmental setting in which people lived, though the authors are careful to note that they are interested in presenting the environment before and after a human presence.¹⁵³ This is important because the narrative at hand discusses not just Elkmont’s history as a resort community but also addresses the Native American history of the area beginning with the Pre-PaleoIndian Period. However, the document notes that there was not a significant Native American presence at Elkmont. Native Americans were present in the Middle and Late Archaic Periods and the Middle Woodland Period.¹⁵⁴ There is a summary of the Mississippian and Historic Cherokee periods, but the document does not indicate there was a settlement at Elkmont during either time period.¹⁵⁵

Consistent with other accounts of settlement in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the report states that Euro-American settlers came to the Elkmont area near the end of the Late Qualla period of the historic Cherokee in the early 1830s.¹⁵⁶ Unique to this assertion is that there is no reason provided for this late arrival to the area.¹⁵⁷ Other scholars have made the argument that the Euro-Americans did not arrive in Great Smoky Mountain communities, such as Cades Cove, until the nineteenth century due to the threats from Native American

¹⁵³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 161.

¹⁵⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 162.

¹⁵⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 164.

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 9; Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 5-13; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 164.

¹⁵⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 164.

populations.¹⁵⁸ Yet, the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* claims a similar date of settlement in Elkmont while also claiming there was not a Cherokee presence in the area of settlement.¹⁵⁹ However, the authors point out that minimal archaeological study of the Elkmont Historic District has been conducted by anyone.¹⁶⁰ This leaves a hole in the narrative guiding management of the District and thus a missed opportunity for interpretation of the Native American presence, settlement of the community by Euro-Americans, and Native American/Euro-American relations at Elkmont.

Though the Park's staff missed an excellent opportunity to use Elkmont to discuss Native Americans and Euro-American settlement in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the authors proceed to tell a detailed and complete account of Elkmont Historic District. Elkmont formed the base for the railroad, lumbering, and tourism industries in the area. Lumbering existed in Elkmont prior to the introduction of large-scale mechanical logging as mountaineers engaged in selective cutting during the 1880s and 1890s. The arrival of commercial logging in the area brought both lumbering and the railroad to Elkmont. Arguably, according to the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment*, Elkmont necessitated the introduction of the railroad industry to Great Smoky Mountains National Park as the formation of the Little River Lumber Company in the early 1900s led to the formation of Elkmont town, located where the Elkmont Campground now sits, when the Little River Lumber Company established the area as its basecamp.¹⁶¹ The Little River

¹⁵⁸ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 164.

¹⁶⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 174-187.

¹⁶¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, v, 10-11, 164-165.

Railroad Company was chartered in 1901 and operated until 1940.¹⁶² Though the railroad left Elkmont in 1926, Elkmont was partially the reason for its existence given that the town was the location of the company's intensive logging efforts from 1908 to 1926.

The introduction of commercial lumbering and the railroad to Elkmont ushered in a new era of industry. Colonel Townsend, President of Little River Lumber Company, was interested in a profit rather than a specific industry and as such, he saw the introduction of the railroad combined with the new "back to nature" movement sweeping the nation as an opportunity for further exploitation of the land and deeded a piece of property adjoining Elkmont town to a group of business men from Knoxville for the purpose of establishing a resort called the Appalachian Club.¹⁶³ The 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* defines this new period of development as The Resort Era at Elkmont (1910-1934).¹⁶⁴ The authors directly quote the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Elkmont Historic District. This is an important move on their part because the authors, and by extension the Park, are acknowledging the validity of Elkmont's historic value and placement on the National Register despite the 1982 *General Management Plan's* intent to remove all the structures in the District.¹⁶⁵ This quoted material contained in the Park's official narrative of the Resort Era from 1910 to 1934 is included in Appendix A.

¹⁶² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, v, 10-11, 164-165.

¹⁶³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 165.

¹⁶⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 165.

¹⁶⁵ This document is available online at the National Register of Historic Places web page. National Register Digital Assets, Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains NP," Digital Archive on NPGallery, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, "https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=3fae728f-628a-4d05-9ec1-cc11f99c921a.

Prior to the establishment of the Appalachian Club in 1910, Col. Townsend offered wealthy Knoxville residents the opportunity to visit Elkmont for day excursions by way of the Little River Railroad beginning in 1909.¹⁶⁶ Offering the people property in Elkmont ensured Townsend's business venture would continue its success. In 1919, the Club's leaders changed its name to the New Appalachian Club, but the concept remained: Club members could purchase a lot upon which to build a cabin or purchase a room in the original Appalachian Clubhouse, which burned in 1933.¹⁶⁷ It became so successful that the Appalachian Club formed the hub of three subcommunities: Daisy Town, Millionaire's Row, and Society Hill.¹⁶⁸ In 1912, Col. Townsend sold another piece of property adjoining Elkmont town to the Carter brothers from Knoxville, who built the Wonderland Hotel on its site.¹⁶⁹ At this time, the Little River Railroad's tourism business venture's success was guaranteed and offered daily stops at the Wonderland Hotel, Elkmont, and the Appalachian Club.¹⁷⁰ By 1915, the Wonderland Hotel was sold to Knoxville residents who formed the Wonderland Club and operated it similarly to the Appalachian Club.¹⁷¹ Not everyone stayed at either Club for extended periods of time, though some families stayed for entire

¹⁶⁶ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Appalachian Club, February 4, 1994, Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 166-167.

¹⁶⁷ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 167.

¹⁶⁸ Refer to the map located in figure 1 on page 5.

¹⁶⁹ Refer to the map located in figure 2 on page 6.

¹⁷⁰ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 167.

¹⁷¹ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 168.

summers.¹⁷² Regardless, the recreational vacation in the Smoky Mountains was an exclusive privilege only open to Club members. Col. Townsend's tourism business venture was a success as people visited the area for recreational tourism purposes. Whether intentional or not, Townsend was quite literally laying the foundation for the future Great Smoky Mountains National Park as he promoted recreational tourism in the area as supplemental income to his commercial logging business. By 1925, the Little River Railroad's tracks were dismantled and removed, but a gravel road was laid in its place from Townsend, Tennessee to Elkmont, Tennessee in 1926 along the same asphalt path that present-day visitors now travel.¹⁷³

The final chapter in the Elkmont history provided by the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* discusses Elkmont's place within the story of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The authors describe this era in Elkmont's history as Great Smoky Mountains National Park (1930s to Present).¹⁷⁴ During this time, the people's experiences and enthusiasm for the back to nature movement at the Appalachian and Wonderland Clubs at Elkmont directly led to the National Park Movement. Many of the Club members were supporters of a national park in the Smoky Mountains early in the campaign.¹⁷⁵ Their ultimate disdain for the campaign was likely the result of their realization that their Elkmont properties were included among those destined for eminent domain if the Park became a

¹⁷² Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 168.

¹⁷³ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 168.

¹⁷⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 168.

¹⁷⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 168.

reality.¹⁷⁶ This story is not included in the interpretive material at the Elkmont Historic District, but it is important that the Park made efforts towards transparency with the public and included Elkmont's role in the creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the official narrative found in the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment*.

Just prior to the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934, many of the Elkmont property owners placed legal pressure on Congress because they refused to relinquish their property to the state of Tennessee.¹⁷⁷ Congress succumbed to the pressure, and offered the Elkmont property owners a payment equaling half of a given property's appraisal price and a lifetime lease if they would relinquish ownership of the property.¹⁷⁸ Many property owners, even those who owned homesteads and faced significant restrictions hindering their way of life, accepted this offer.¹⁷⁹ The National Park Service demolished the properties that belonged to those who sold their property to the state of Tennessee for the full appraisal value by 1932.¹⁸⁰ By 1950, the Park's staff removed the entire town of Elkmont, and the only evidence of the former community was the remnant formed by the Appalachian and Wonderland Clubs.¹⁸¹ The authors of the *Amendment* argue that the creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park ultimately preserved Elkmont

¹⁷⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 168.

¹⁷⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

¹⁷⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

¹⁷⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

¹⁸⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

¹⁸¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

Historic District.¹⁸² Little construction occurred after 1932, and the Park's management placed restrictions on building modifications, enabling the buildings to retain their architectural integrity.¹⁸³ However, in making this argument, the authors fail to point out that the leasing of the property was what preserved the buildings. Without these leases, the Park's staff would have removed the existing buildings in the same way that Park staff removed buildings in the town of Elkmont.¹⁸⁴ Because these leases existed, and people lived at Elkmont long after the Park was established, visitors may, in theory, visit the Historic District today.

Founding the Park

The interpretation of Elkmont began long before anyone considered it a historic district. All interpretation in Great Smoky Mountains National Park finds its roots in the enabling legislation signed on May 22, 1926. This document states that the goal of the Park was simply to “set apart as public parks [Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park] for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”¹⁸⁵ The stated goal was in reference to the Organic Act which states the purpose of the National Park Service was and is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹⁸⁶ However, the

¹⁸² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

¹⁸³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

¹⁸⁴ This is explained in detail in the Thomason report: Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community: Sevier County, Tennessee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park* for National Park Service, Southeast Region, Atlanta, GA, March 20, 1993.

¹⁸⁵ 16 U.S.C. (403).

¹⁸⁶ 16 U.S.C. (1).

Southern Appalachian National Park Commission also influenced the goal and its fulfillment when the members defined the purpose of their proposed Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1924 with six criteria that omitted all reference to cultural resources.¹⁸⁷ The attitudes of Park promoters reflected in these documents laid the foundation for all interpretation and preservation in the Park.

Initially, the Park's management was not interested in preserving any buildings. The National Park was valued for its scenic beauty, not its cultural history. A former Park historian even says that by the 1920s, the first pioneer of the Smokies would not have recognized the region and that the goal of the Park promoters was to restore the land to its wild state.¹⁸⁸ Park promoter Carlos Campbell describes the centrality of scenic values in the creation of Great Smokies when he discusses the beginnings of the National Park Movement. He states that Ann Davis, an early Park promoter, suggested a National Park for the Smoky Mountains after she observed the area was just as beautiful as the western national parks she visited in 1923.¹⁸⁹ Campbell then turned to the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee's member representing the Appalachian Mountain Club, Harlan P. Kelsey, who stated, "the region around Mount Guyot, Le Conte and Clingmans Dome appears to be the wildest and best beginning for such a park [Great Smokies]."¹⁹⁰ Most of Campbell's discussion follows the National Park Movement's struggles with land acquisition, but the theme of scenic value remains prominent throughout: the Park promoters' goal was to acquire land and save what little virgin forest remained in a region denuded by commercial

¹⁸⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 20.

¹⁸⁸ Ed Trout, *Historic Buildings of the Smokies*, (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 1995), 9-10.

¹⁸⁹ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 13.

¹⁹⁰ Carlos C. Campbell, 22.

logging companies.¹⁹¹ Even when Director of the National Park Service Horace Albright visited the Park in 1930, he emphasized the beauty of the area in his observations.¹⁹² Similarly, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Park dedication in 1940 focused on the rare beauty of the region.¹⁹³ While these people were not the Park management who ultimately determined how the Park's cultural resources would be preserved and interpreted, their ideas certainly influenced early Park management and their priorities in interpretation and preservation.

Colorist literature and even Park promoters often spoke in reference to the area as though it was predominantly uninhabited, though they had little to no evidence to support their inaccurate claims.¹⁹⁴ An early Park guide written by former resident Laura Thornborough largely overlooks cultural history and focuses on scenic tours of the Park while describing removal of inhabitants in a positive light.¹⁹⁵ Yet, communities that the Smokies preserved, such as Cataloochee and Cades Cove, had as many as 921 and 600 residents, respectively, when the Park was established.¹⁹⁶ Daniel Pierce asserts in his book *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* that "the area inside the proposed park boundary contained an estimated twelve hundred farms, five thousand lots and summer homes, and over 4,000 people."¹⁹⁷ The land the states of Tennessee and North Carolina used to create the Park was not uninhabited. Nevertheless, the buildings preserved

¹⁹¹ Carlos C. Campbell.

¹⁹² Carlos C. Campbell, 100-101.

¹⁹³ Carlos C. Campbell, 129.

¹⁹⁴ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 155; Horace Kephart and George Ellison, *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among the Mountaineers* (1913 repr., Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998).

¹⁹⁵ Laura Thornborough, *The Great Smoky Mountains*, Rev. ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1956).

¹⁹⁶ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 155.

¹⁹⁷ Daniel Pierce, 155.

were not those of the contemporary residents, they were the log structures that belonged to the people who settled those areas much earlier. The Park's staff or contractors removed, tore down, or burned buildings that did not fit the rustic "log cabin" model.¹⁹⁸ The Park's management considered these buildings fire hazards, and believed that their removal created a more authentic wilderness appearance.¹⁹⁹ As such, the Park's Superintendent J. Ross Eakin created the policy that the Park would save only the "best examples of pioneer architecture."²⁰⁰ Durwood Dunn argues that Cades Cove, now known for its "pioneer architecture," was beyond recognition when the Park was done.²⁰¹

By deciding to preserve only "pioneer architecture," the Park's management in turn preserved only those things that represented a pioneer lifestyle.²⁰² National Park Service leaders such as Horace Albright supported this stance.²⁰³ Of course, the pioneer lifestyle idea found its roots in the same literature that suggested the area was uninhabited. An isolated wilderness was not a place of progress. Thus, Durwood Dunn argued that the Park destroyed anything representing progress, modern technology, or anything that was not primitive.²⁰⁴ Early Park staff promoted a cultural museum as well as interpretation of primitive culture. It is worth noting that the cultural museum promoted by early Park staff member, H. C. Wilburn, was not built until 2011, though the Mountain Farm Museum was placed at

¹⁹⁸ Daniel Pierce, 166-167; Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 35; Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community: Sevier County, Tennessee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park* for National Park Service, Southeast Region, Atlanta, GA, March 20, 1993, 21; Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," Section 7 Page 2, Section 8 Page 3.

¹⁹⁹ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 177.

²⁰⁰ Daniel Pierce, 177.

²⁰¹ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 256.

²⁰² Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 182.

²⁰³ Daniel Pierce, 182.

²⁰⁴ Daniel Pierce, 182; Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 256.

Oconaluftee in the 1950s.²⁰⁵ Despite early staff members discussing both a natural history museum and a cultural history in the 1930s, the Park built a natural history museum at Sugarlands by 1961, much earlier than Oconaluftee’s 2011 cultural history museum located in the visitor center.²⁰⁶ Natural resources took precedence, and cultural history was brushed aside as a low priority. The Park management’s initial perspectives on preservation of “pioneer architecture” and interpretation of “pioneer lifestyle” laid the foundation for preservation and interpretation in the years to come.

The ideas the first Park staff presented regarding preservation and interpretation in the 1930s are still seen in the 1982 *General Management Plan*, the document that guided the Park’s management until 2016. The authors assert the purpose of the Park before addressing any other issues. The document reiterates the 1926 enabling legislation and the 1916 Organic Act’s goals and further states the “the purpose of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is to preserve its exceptionally diverse resources and to provide for public benefit from and enjoyment of those resources in ways that will leave them – and the dynamic natural processes of which they are components – essentially unaltered by the visitors who enjoy them.”²⁰⁷ By resources, the authors of the document mean, the “abundance of it [the Park’s] plants and animals, the beauty of its mountain terrain and waterways, the quality of its remnants of pioneer culture, and the the sanctuary it affords for those resources and for its

²⁰⁵ “Mountain Farm Museum and Mingus Mill,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 2, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/mfm.htm>; “New Visitor Center Wins High Marks for Green Design and Construction,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC, TN, National Park Service, February 29, 2012, accessed October 2, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/ovc-leeds-gold.htm>.

²⁰⁶ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 181; “New Visitor Center Wins High Marks for Green Design and Construction,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC, TN; Field Notes, 1934-1938 (bulk dates: 1934-1938), The Willis King Papers 1932-1959 (bulk dates: 1934-1940), Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; McClelland, Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 467.

²⁰⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 5.

modern human users.”²⁰⁸ Fulfillment of these goals directly influences the Park management’s stance on Elkmont Historic regarding preservation, interpretation, and visitor use.

Regarding Elkmont, now an area consisting of two former southern Appalachian resorts that were occupied from 1910 to 1992, the 1982 document explicitly states, “Except for restoration to natural conditions of land now occupied by Elkmont Preservation Association (homes and Wonderland Hotel) on expiration of leases, use of the area will remain essentially as in 1977 with facilities as shown on the General Development Plan (drawing 133-20,087).”²⁰⁹ Interestingly, this statement is likely influenced by the cultural resources policy that states, “Less significant structures that do not qualify for the National Register will be allowed to undergo natural deterioration, and the sites will be reclaimed by the natural environment.”²¹⁰ Even in regards to the “pioneer” landscape, the Park’s management does not always adhere to preservation or duplication due to cost and possible detrimental consequences to the natural environment.²¹¹ Still, the document implies that preservation takes place predominantly within historic districts, a designation the Park’s management did not ascribe to Elkmont, and the Park’s staff often moved buildings to said historic districts in order to justify or better preserve them.²¹² Besides, in terms of interpretation, “supreme sanctuary . . . provides the underlying theme of the park.”²¹³ Though the interpretive themes include “culture of mountaineers” and “Indian occupancy,” those are subthemes. The Park’s primary theme was stated in the 1982 *General Management Plan* as

²⁰⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 5.

²⁰⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 45.

²¹⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 27.

²¹¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 30.

²¹² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 29-30.

²¹³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 32.

follows: “The highest purpose of the park’s interpretive efforts is believed to be a demonstration of how it is preserved as a sanctuary from some of the effects of the modern technological world and how its special qualities can relate to and benefit – the people of that world.”²¹⁴ This directly flies in the face of the Wonderland Park Hotel’s advertisements claiming they offered electricity in 1914.²¹⁵ Thus, the Park did not always interpret reality in order to uphold their interpretive policy.

The presence of people and their modern conventions directly contradicted the Park’s interpretive aims, especially since the Park’s management could not fully control the residents of Elkmont. Many Elkmont residents refused to sell their property; they hired lawyers and held out until 1932 when the state of Tennessee offered lifetime leases for Elkmont properties in exchange for receipt of only half of the property’s appraised value.²¹⁶ Most mountaineers were not able to claim this offer because they had already sold their property by 1932.²¹⁷ Some Elkmont residents who held out for this offer were indeed mountaineer residents, but the last of these in Elkmont were restricted in their ability to fulfill their former lifestyle and sustain themselves due to restrictions on hunting animals or gathering plants in a national park.²¹⁸ Thus, the final mountain residents in Elkmont who

²¹⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 32.

²¹⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 166.

²¹⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 11, 15, 169.

²¹⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

²¹⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169; Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 163.

managed to obtain lifetime leases in 1932, later relinquished their property by the 1950s, with the exception of one resident who retained his property until the 1980s.²¹⁹

The Appalachian and Wonderland Club residents were different, though their presence still contradicted the Park's interpretive aims. They did not need to support themselves on the land, because these were vacation residences. Shortly after 1932, the Park's management converted the lifetime leases to 20-year leases.²²⁰ The Park's management renewed the 20-year leases through a negotiation in which both Elkmont and the National Park's headquarters building and visitor center received electricity.²²¹ This was the first time the Park sponsored electricity in Elkmont.²²² Though the Wonderland Hotel offered electricity in 1914, John Morrell states in his manuscript that:

The Wonderland Club constructed and operated a hydro-electric plant . . . As the river's flow fluctuated widely, and as there was little storage capacity, diesel-powered generators were installed as auxiliary equipment. The original installations were scarcely adequate to carry the load demanded for lighting, and when the cottage-holders began installing electric refrigerators [*sic*] and electric stoves, or to use electric heaters on cool mornings, the over-taxed system failed completely. It was commonly said that when one wanted to run off the light it was necessary to strike a match in order to locate the switch.²²³

In 1972, the Park's management renewed the 20-year leases for the third time.²²⁴ However, there had long been opposition coming from Park staff and former Park residents towards the Park administrator for permitting residents in a "wilderness" park.²²⁵ In addition, the Park's

²¹⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

²²⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 169.

²²¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 15, 169.

²²² John Morrell, "A History of the Cottages in the Vicinity of the Former Town of Elkmont, Namely: The Appalachian Club and the Wonderland Club," September 2, 1976, 9.

²²³ John Morrell, "A History of the Cottages," 9.

²²⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 15-16.

²²⁵ John Morrell, "A History of the Cottages."

emphasis on the natural environment and a predominantly uninhabited region with a few mountaineers living an isolated and primitive lifestyle throughout led to the *General Management Plan*'s statement of the Park management's intent to remove the buildings upon expiration of the 1972 leases in 1992. Thus, the formation of the Elkmont Preservation Committee in 1972 in order to negotiate a 1992 lease renewal was a vain effort: with the exception of three remaining lifetime leases, all the Elkmont leases expired on December 31, 1992, and the structures reverted into full ownership of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.²²⁶

The 1982 *General Management Plan* stated that upon expiration of leases, the Park's staff would remove the buildings.²²⁷ Not everyone agreed with this decision, particularly those who leased the property. One particular individual who spent many summers at Elkmont, Eleanor Dickinson, elected to nominate the entire area to the National Register of Historic Places as a district.²²⁸ There is no evidence suggesting the Park's staff was aware of her initiative, and Eleanor Dickinson's National Register Nomination for the Elkmont Historic District was ultimately not the nomination form that resulted in Elkmont's listing on the National Register.²²⁹ Her nomination form is dated January 30, 1993.²³⁰ Meanwhile, the Park's management and the Southeast Region NPS office contracted Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners out of Nashville, Tennessee to complete a report titled *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community: Sevier County, Tennessee, Great Smoky*

²²⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 16.

²²⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 45.

²²⁸ Eleanor Dickinson, "Elkmont Community Historic District"; Eleanor Creekmore Dickinson, "ELKMONT."

²²⁹ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District."

²³⁰ Eleanor Dickinson, "Elkmont Community Historic District."

Mountains National Park.²³¹ Thomason and Associates completed this report on March 20, 1993, and it formed the basis for the official National Register Nomination Form filed by Thomason and Associates and the National Park Service that resulted in Elkmont Historic District's listing on the National Register.²³² It seems Eleanor Dickinson was attempting to acquire National Register status for Elkmont Historic District in opposition to the Park's policy of removal, given that the Park also had the policy of preserving any buildings that qualified for the National Register, especially since she adamantly claimed origination rights for the National Register Nomination and was outspoken against demolition by neglect and other Park policies.²³³ However, Executive Order 11593 meant National Register nomination was likely inevitable, though Eleanor Dickinson may have sped up the process.²³⁴ Regardless, the National Register listed Elkmont as a Historic District, and this listing placed Great Smoky Mountains National Park in a difficult situation because it could uphold neither the policy of removing the buildings nor the policy of preserving National Register eligible buildings. The management found itself in a stalemate, especially when the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer refused to allow the Park to remove Elkmont Historic District²³⁵

The National Park's stalemate ultimately meant the fulfillment of the Park's policy of demolition by neglect. Though the Park's staff did not use the term "demolition by neglect,"

²³¹ Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community*, March 20, 1993.

²³² Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District."

²³³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 30, 45, 61, 67-68; Eleanor Creekmore Dickenson to Michael Tollefson, Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, May 30, 2002, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Eleanor Creekmore Dickinson, "ELKMONT."

²³⁴ Executive Order 11593 required federal agencies to preserve and care for historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant resources in their possession.

²³⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, vi.

they still explicitly stated the use of the practice in their 1982 *General Management Plan* when they said, “Less significant structures that do not qualify for the National Register will be allowed to undergo natural deterioration, and the sites will be reclaimed by the natural environment,” and:

Approximately 1,200 structures were scattered throughout the park when it was established. Since that time some of the more outstanding structures have been moved from remote areas to sites more accessible to park visitors. Others have been sold and removed, destroyed, or allowed to deteriorate, but what is probably the finest collection of pioneer log structures in the United States remains in the park.²³⁶

Except, in this case, the Park’s management was engaging in demolition by neglect with properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A prime example of this is seen in the Thomason Report. The Thomason Report stated that most of the buildings in the Elkmont Historic District were in good to excellent condition in 1993.²³⁷ This includes the Wonderland Hotel, though it did have some issues that needed immediate attention: in particular, water infiltration in the porch, exterior walls, and foundation.²³⁸ It is evident that the Park did not act upon Thomason and Associates’ recommendation to address these issues in the years that followed. A 2002 cultural resources report, also referred to as a historic structure assessment report, stated that the building was in good condition, though this assessment only took the exterior of the building into consideration.²³⁹ A 2003 reevaluation found structural failure in the interior of the building.²⁴⁰ By 2005, the Wonderland Hotel

²³⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 30, 13.

²³⁷ Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community*, 68.

²³⁸ Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, 74.

²³⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 5, 169, 172.

²⁴⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2009, 5, 172.

collapsed, a mere 12 years since it was last inhabited.²⁴¹ It was a major loss since the Wonderland Hotel was among the last existing buildings representative of the Southern Appalachian Resort Era and its vernacular hotel architecture.²⁴² Furthermore, the building was unique in that it was the most remote of said Southern Appalachian Resorts.

As the Park engaged in demolition by neglect, management continued to work to uphold the 1982 *General Management Plan*'s policy of removal. In the [decade] the Park's staff placed an interpretive panel at Elkmont explaining management's intent to remove the buildings.²⁴³ Documents put forth by the Park, including the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment*, expressed a resentful attitude towards Elkmont Historic District's listing on the National Register.²⁴⁴ However, when the Park's management proposed removal of the structures in 1994, the Tennessee SHPO quickly objected.²⁴⁵ Two more proposals led to the SHPO as well as the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation requiring the initiation of a new consulting process that adhered to cultural and environmental legislation in 1999.²⁴⁶ It took 17 years for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to inform Great Smoky Mountains National Park that they were required to adhere to cultural and environmental legislation on all properties National Register eligible, a possibility for Elkmont Historic District in 1982 when the management plan was established even though the structures had not yet been listed. This seems to suggest it is possible the National Park's

²⁴¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 5, 172.

²⁴² Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community*, 27; Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District," Section 7 Pages 5-6; Section 8 Pages 2-4.

²⁴³ Interpretive Panel, Jakes Creek Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, early 2000s.

²⁴⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 3.

²⁴⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 3.

²⁴⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 3.

staff believed that if they removed the buildings before anyone nominated them, the Park could avoid adherence to Federal regulations regarding cultural resources and historic structures. Of course, the Appalachian Club and Wonderland Club buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the events that followed ultimately led to preservation of at least some buildings and their interpretation.²⁴⁷ The remainder of this chapter will discuss interpretation at Elkmont, and the narrative the Park staff tells the public.

Elkmont, According to Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Blog posts about Elkmont Historic District are abundant on the Internet. This is surprising at first because nearly all the blog posts refer to an “abandoned ghost town” in the heart of the Smokies, though the town itself is gone and all that remains are the buildings associated with two adjoining southern Appalachian resorts.²⁴⁸ Some even claim that the authors have “discovered” this place.²⁴⁹ Even *Trip Advisor* refers to the area as a ghost town.²⁵⁰ It leaves the reader, especially readers from the surrounding area, baffled. How can visitors discover an “abandoned ghost town” that Park administrators have always known existed? In some ways, these posts reveal the shock among visitors that people once lived in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. However, they also reveal something subtler and just as important. The idea of an abandoned Elkmont or a newly discovered ghost town points to the fact that if anyone desires to know the story of Elkmont, they have to go looking for it.

²⁴⁷ The conclusion to this chapter briefly discusses which Elkmont buildings were selected for preservation, though Chapter 3 goes into further detail regarding the Park staff’s selection of those particular buildings.

²⁴⁸ Austin Coop, “Tour the creepy abandoned building”; Ashley Hubbard, “The Sad History of the Elkmont”; Ashley Hubbard, “Finding the Abandoned Wonderland”; “Elkmont Ghost Town” TheGreatSmokies.net; “Elkmont Ghost Town,” Trip Advisor; “Elkmont.”

²⁴⁹ Greg Newkirk, “Hiker Discovers and Abandoned Town Inside Tennessee’s Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” *HuffPost*, last updated October 4, 2014, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/roadtrippers/hiker-discovers-an-abando_b_5927164.html.

²⁵⁰ “Elkmont Ghost Town,” Trip Advisor.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park's staff does tell Elkmont's story: interpretive Park Rangers offer programs in the Elkmont area, there are interpretive panels placed throughout the historic district, and the documents guiding management of Elkmont Historic District are on the Internet. Despite this, the Elkmont story is one easily perceived as brushed aside, lingering in the shadows of other stories or issues that take precedence.

If anyone wishes to know about Elkmont in the modern age, the first thing they may do is visit the Great Smoky Mountains National Park website.²⁵¹ The visitor may hover over each of the buttons on the website's information bar as they look for locations in the Park or the Park's history. Unfortunately, this is not helpful in locating information on the Elkmont Historic District. None of the buttons that come up on the screen say the word, "Elkmont." Instead, under "Places to Go," the visitor is directed to "Cades Cove," "Cades Cove History," "Cataloochee," and "Cataloochee History."²⁵² Elkmont begins popping up only when the visitor types "Elkmont" in the Smokies website's search bar. Still, most of the results do not include "Elkmont" in their title. Instead, they may say "Appalachian Clubhouse" or "Spence Cabin 'River Lodge.'" These are terms that mean nothing to the person who does not already know something about the buildings at Elkmont. Most results in the search pertain to fireflies, camping, and reservations. There is little indication of the Historic District's history. Rather, Elkmont's story is embedded within the pages of the "Appalachian Clubhouse," "Spence Cabin," "Meet the Cultural Resource Managers," and "Briefing Statements" pages.²⁵³ If the visitor researches the Park's website well enough, they can put together the

²⁵¹ Refer to Appendix B to see Great Smoky Mountains web pages that mention Elkmont Historic District.

²⁵² "A Wondrous Diversity of Life," Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

²⁵³ "Appalachian Clubhouse," Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/appalachian-clubhouse.htm>;

history of Elkmont, but it requires effort. This is a message in itself: the Park tells the story of Elkmont Historic District, but the history of this community is not as relevant as the history of other communities in the Park. It seems as though Elkmont is a story that the Park must tell but either does not want to tell it or does not want to draw attention to.

In addition to the Park's website, the visitor also has the option of visiting Elkmont to learn its history. At the site, the visitor will find an interpretive panel at the Wonderland Hotel staircase, the Little River Trail trailhead, the Jake's Creek Trail trailhead, the Baumann Cabin, the Mayo Cabin, next to the Appalachian Clubhouse, and on the eastern elevation of the Appalachian Clubhouse.²⁵⁴ These are the most accessible sources of information for the visitor, though it is important to acknowledge that there are no indications Elkmont contains these buildings or panels until the visitor has arrived at the location *unless* the visitor has *closely* examined Great Smoky Mountains National Park's website. Despite the difficulty of accessing the Elkmont story, the Park does tell a moving version for all who find it.

Standing in front of the Appalachian Clubhouse, one reads a quote from a Little River Railroad brochure, "Scenery in The Elkmont Country is without compare. It challenges description even at the hands of a poet," laid over an image of the first Appalachian

"Spence Cabin 'River Lodge,'" Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/spence-cabin.htm>; "Meet the Managers: Cultural Resources," Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/nature/df609-meet.htm>; National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, "Future Management of Elkmont Historic District," Briefing Statement, September 19, 2007, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/management/upload/Brief-Elkmont.pdf>; National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, "Future Management of Elkmont Historic District," Briefing Statement, January 27, 2010, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/management/upload/Elkmont-Restoration-Jan-2010.pdf>.

²⁵⁴ Images of these interpretive panels are in Appendix C. A map of these locations is located in figure 1 on page 5.

Clubhouse which burned in 1925.²⁵⁵ Looking at the surroundings, one might connect with the quote and nod with understanding at the Appalachian Clubhouse standing behind the interpretive panel. For an environment so beautiful, of course the Appalachian Club members rebuilt the Clubhouse. The main text of the panel establishes the context for not only the Clubhouse but also the community that developed because of the Club.²⁵⁶ The panel's text places the Appalachian Club in the midst of the southern Appalachian resorts, sportsmen's clubs, and the logging community.²⁵⁷ Little River Lumber Company appealed to these elite audiences as it promoted the use of its railroad to access land, surrounded by hillsides that were being logged, for recreational purposes by way of a three-hour train ride on the Little River Railroad from Knoxville.²⁵⁸ There is no mention of the Appalachian Club's cutover land, only the quote alluding to the region's beauty.²⁵⁹

The Little River Railroad Company must have succeeded in its promotional endeavor as it deeded 50 acres of land to civic and business leaders in 1910 for use as the Appalachian Club.²⁶⁰ This indicates that the company was seeking both the sale of property and the guaranteed continued use of its passenger cars.²⁶¹ The interpretive panel in front of the Club building describes the members of the newly founded Club as Knoxville's commercial and civic elite who ultimately developed into three distinct sub-communities in what became Elkmont Historic District: Daisy Town, Millionaire's Row, and Society Hill.²⁶² The

²⁵⁵ "Appalachian Clubhouse," Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2010 or 2011; Refer to figure 15 in Appendix C.

²⁵⁶ "Appalachian Clubhouse."

²⁵⁷ "Appalachian Clubhouse."

²⁵⁸ "Appalachian Clubhouse."

²⁵⁹ "Appalachian Clubhouse"; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 11.

²⁶⁰ "Appalachian Clubhouse," Interpretive Panel.

²⁶¹ "Appalachian Clubhouse."

²⁶² "Appalachian Clubhouse."

Appalachian Clubhouse adjoining Daisy Town functioned as the central hub that united the three sub-communities. Collectively, the three sub-communities and the Clubhouse formed a community called “Clubtown.”²⁶³

Near the Appalachian Clubhouse panel is another interpretive panel titled “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture” because the unique architecture of the buildings characterized the community.²⁶⁴ This panel reiterates an important point about the community: the inhabitants were not native to the area.²⁶⁵ Rather, the people who built these houses were city dwellers influenced by the latest styles.²⁶⁶ The Historic District contains log structures, but the log structures were the exception to the rule. Thus, the Park’s interpretive information describes the Historic District as an eclectic hodgepodge rather than a uniform community reflecting similar architectural trends as is the case in Cades Cove and Cataloochee.²⁶⁷ The architecture panel points to the Levi Trentham Cabin and describes it as an 1830 one-story log house that, though remodeled in 1832 to serve as a guest house, is one of the oldest buildings in the region.²⁶⁸ There is no geographic boundary to the term “region” so the reader is unaware as to whether this description of the building is restricted to Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, or a larger geographic region. Regardless of age, the panel does place an emphasis on the remodeling of all the buildings in this architecturally eclectic community, not just the log buildings.²⁶⁹

²⁶³ “Appalachian Clubhouse”

²⁶⁴ “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture,” Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2014; Refer to figure 16 in Appendix C.

²⁶⁵ “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture,” Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2014.

²⁶⁶ “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture.”

²⁶⁷ “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture.”

²⁶⁸ “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture.”

²⁶⁹ “Daisy Town’s Eclectic Architecture.”

The history of the area as a logging community is briefly alluded to with the mention that Levi Trentham's cabin was not the only remodeled building; many of the buildings were also remodeled due to previously functioning as temporary mobile homes for employees of the lumber company.²⁷⁰ Such buildings were railroad "set-off" houses.²⁷¹ Thus, the log buildings owned and used by mountaineers, the railroad set-off houses, and the new construction by the social elites inevitably created the architecturally eclectic hodgepodge the panel references.²⁷² The panel's narrative of the community's incorporation of preceding communities' architecture with their own new construction and inspiration alludes to the area's colorful and diverse past without actually telling each individual community's story and the evolution of the collection of buildings known as Elkmont Historic District.²⁷³

The story that the two panels thus far emphasize is the narrative of the Appalachian Club. The people were social elites consisting of business leaders, political leaders, and other city dwellers. A 1910s and 1920s trend known as the "back-to-nature" movement inspired these people to come to Elkmont.²⁷⁴ Thus, they incorporated this movement into their dwellings by focusing on simplicity and natural materials.²⁷⁵ This looked different for each family, so some of the buildings are made of rough-hewn logs while others are board-and-batten.²⁷⁶ The panel also states that the new craftsman style of architecture in the early 20th century influenced the buildings in the community.²⁷⁷ Porches allowed nature to become a

²⁷⁰ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷¹ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷² "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷³ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷⁴ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷⁵ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷⁶ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷⁷ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

part of the people's lives by bringing the living space outside.²⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the people brought nature indoors by including rustic features in the interiors, such as stone fireplaces and exposed wood in the ceilings, walls, and floors.²⁷⁹ The community's embrace of the craftsman style of architecture places the people of the Appalachian Club into the context of their own era, but the Daisy Town architecture panel also tugs at the heartstrings of the visitor. Like the visitor today who longs for the simple life of log cabins in Cades Cove, the Appalachian Club members were hearkening back to a simpler life in the past with their desire to "get back to nature," as well.²⁸⁰

The next panel is titled just that: "Back to Nature."²⁸¹ This panel asks the visitor to imagine a time gone by as they consider what Daisy Town was like 100 years ago.²⁸² The panel explicitly states that the people who lived in cities during that time "crave[d] the natural beauty and refreshing climate of the Great Smoky Mountains."²⁸³ They came to the valley, which today looks nothing like a valley, where the Little River and Jake's Creek converge and formed multiple "resort enclaves."²⁸⁴ They came by railroad to escape pollution and heat in the city as well as their daily routines and responsibilities.²⁸⁵ They played sports, socialized, and relaxed with family and friends.²⁸⁶ It sounds much like the visitor's own experience in the Park today, and an Elkmont resident echoes what many visitors are likely to say about Great Smoky Mountains National Park today: "I tell you

²⁷⁸ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁷⁹ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁸⁰ "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture."

²⁸¹ "Back to Nature," Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2014; Refer to figure 17 in Appendix C.

²⁸² "Back to Nature."

²⁸³ "Back to Nature."

²⁸⁴ "Back to Nature."

²⁸⁵ "Back to Nature."

²⁸⁶ "Back to Nature."

something about Elkmont. It's a magical place. When I come up here I feel close to God. I love this place, my favorite place in the world to be."²⁸⁷ Yet, the panel points out an important detail: in the logging era, there were few trees to offer the shade now covering the historic district.²⁸⁸ This allows the Park to include interpretive themes of logging and reforestation as the Park gets "back to nature." Nothing is said about the tree cover during the resort days, but there is a piece of background artwork on the panel illustrating a 1930s Daisy Town lush with greenery, representing a serene world city dwellers seek, in the past and today.²⁸⁹

At the parking areas for the Little River Trail and the section of the Appalachian Club known as Millionaire's Row, there are three identical interpretive panels. They are titled "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club."²⁹⁰ These panels do not tell a narrative. Instead, they answer the questions: What is Elkmont?, Why are these building here and why are they empty?, and What will happen here in the future?²⁹¹ The panels list the facts: there was a logging company town at the site of the current campground, and this company sold land to affluent individuals from Knoxville in order to create a private social Club starting out as a gentleman's hunting Club and eventually being an escape from "oppressive" summer for their families.²⁹² When Congress established the National Park, the Appalachian and Wonderland Club members negotiated lesser property prices in exchange for lifetime leases

²⁸⁷ "Back to Nature."

²⁸⁸ "Back to Nature."

²⁸⁹ "Back to Nature."

²⁹⁰ "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2005; "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Jake's Creek Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in early 2005; "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Beside Parking Area for Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in early 2005; Refer to figures 18-20 in Appendix C.

²⁹¹ "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club."

²⁹² "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club."

with the final leases expiring in 1992 and 2001 instead of selling their property and vacating like other mountain property owners.²⁹³ The 1982 *General Management Plan* states that the Park staff will remove the structures upon the expiration of leases; however, in 1994, the National Register of Historic Places listed the buildings as a historic district, providing them with a special protected status within the Park.²⁹⁴ The panels state that the Park is conducting an Environmental Impact Statement on the Historic District in order to evaluate its next steps.²⁹⁵ The most intriguing part of this account is that the panels were still present on June 2, 2017 despite the fact that the information provided on them predates the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment*. A 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* to Elkmont Historic District was approved on June 30, 2009 when the Southeast Region Director signed the Record of Decision, and the Park’s staff has begun both preservation and deconstruction work at the Elkmont Historic District.²⁹⁶ The panels also provide a URL for a website the visitor may refer to for further information, but this website no longer exists.²⁹⁷ Thus, the visitor has knowledge of only part of the story if their only source of information is these

²⁹³ “Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club.”

²⁹⁴ “Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club.”

²⁹⁵ “Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club.”

²⁹⁶ “Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club”; US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*; Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, “Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement/General Management Plan Amendment, Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina; National Park Service, “Future Management of Elkmont Historic District,” Briefing Statement; Bob Miller, “Great Smoky Mountains Opens Appalachian Clubhouse to Public Use,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC, TN, National Park Service, April 21, 2011, last updated April 14, 2015, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/app-clubhouse.htm>; Public Affairs Office, “Historic Spence Cabin Open for Public Use,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, June 12, 2012, last updated April 14, 2015, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/spence-reservations.html>; Public Affairs Office, “Elkmont Historic District Work Underway,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, February 24, 2017, last updated February 24, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/news/elkmont-historic-district.htm>.

²⁹⁷ “Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club”; www.elkmont-gmpa-ea.com.

exhibit panels that do not include relevant information from the now-completed Environmental Impact Statement which is found in the *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment* and further discussed in chapter three.²⁹⁸

In order to complete the Park's Elkmont narrative, it is necessary to turn to Park documents. These are still a part of the story that the Park tells. For one thing, they are available to anyone who wishes to see them. For another, they contain the narrative that forms the basis for the information on the interpretive panels, but these Park documents have more space than a panel. Great Smoky Mountains National Park's official Elkmont narrative is contained in two documents titled *Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment Volumes 1 and 2*, both published in 2010.²⁹⁹

These two documents specifically contain the official Park narrative regarding Elkmont because the Park's staff produced them following the District's placement on the National Register of Historic Places as the Elkmont Historic District in 1994. In 1994, it was necessary to re-evaluate the Park's management of the Historic District, so Park staff formulated several Elkmont management proposals between 1994 and 1999. The National Register of Historic Places deemed the Elkmont buildings historically and architecturally significant according to criteria A and C, but according to the 1982 *General Management Plan*, the Park held a no-action plan for these buildings.³⁰⁰ The Park administrators' intention

²⁹⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*.

²⁹⁹ Some building specific narratives are contained in Historic Structure Reports held by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives.

³⁰⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, iii.

was to remove each building upon the termination of all leases.³⁰¹ The new designation as a historic district meant the Park was faced with determining how to manage Elkmont as a historic district. In order to address that question, by 2000, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation required that the Park undergo a thorough cultural and environmental study of the Elkmont Historic District because none of the Park staff's proposals from 1994 to 1999 met legal standards.³⁰² Thus, the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* necessarily contains the Great Smoky Mountains National Park's official interpretive narrative of Elkmont Historic District, including a natural and cultural history of the area.

The goal of the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* was to, "reevaluate, and amend if appropriate, the current management strategy for the Elkmont Historic District" from the 1982 *GMP*.³⁰³ The process of fulfilling the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment's* goal involved an environmental impact statement, which presents a stated need (management and preservation of Elkmont Historic District), the Park's options for action to address a stated need, a description of the affected environment, and the environmental impact of each possible action.³⁰⁴ An environmental impact statement is required for any federal project that affects the human environment and also includes consultation and coordination with the public and other agencies.³⁰⁵ The completed *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment* totals

³⁰¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 45.

³⁰² This was not the first architectural study of Elkmont Historic District, but this is the most comprehensive study of the Elkmont Historic District, architecturally and otherwise. I will address prior studies when discussing the District's National Register Nomination.

³⁰³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 3.

³⁰⁴ Thomas King, *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, Thomas King, *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2013), 68-71.

³⁰⁵ Thomas King, *Saving Places that Matter: A Citizen's Guide to the National Historic Preservation Act* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 225; Thomas King, *Cultural Resource Laws*, 68-71.

874 pages. The report is available to the public and is even on the Internet.³⁰⁶ However, the document is located on the National Park Service’s Planning, Environment, and Public Comment web page, making it unlikely that the majority of the public are likely to locate the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* easily. The alternative to this option is to request a digital copy of the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* from the Park’s archivist.

The first part of this chapter conveyed the interpretive narrative of the history of Elkmont according to the *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, which clearly provided a fairly complete history of both the Elkmont Historic District and the geographic area commonly known as Elkmont.³⁰⁷ The account included in this chapter is abbreviated from the *General Management Plan Amendment*, but the complete history of the resort era contained in Appendix A is what justified the preservation of Elkmont Historic District and forms the basis for all the interpretive panels currently placed at the District. It is important for the reader to note that this narrative includes details about each of the themes reflected in the Elkmont Historic District Interpretive Panels, such as southern health resorts. Surprising details such as electricity at the resorts are also included in this account, something worth noting given that the 1982 *General Management Plan* stated the supreme interpretive goal of the Park was to emphasize sanctuary and escape from modern technology as the primary Park experience which directly conflicts with the resort experience. The narrative’s inclusion of the importance of the automobile at Elkmont, as well as the National Park Movement in

³⁰⁶ “Elkmont Historic District GMP Amendment and EIS,” Planning, Environment, and Public Comment, National Park Service, undated, accessed October 2, 2017, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=15794>.

³⁰⁷ Refer to the maps located in figure 1 on page 5 and in figure 2 on page 6.

the 1920s, allows for a similar argument. Though the *General Management Plan Amendment's* narrative may in some places conflict with the interpretive and visitor use goals of the 1982 *General Management Plan*, it provides a more holistic picture of the Elkmont Historic District and it is an amendment to the 1982 document, after all. The inclusion of legal controversy and the role of Elkmont Club members in the National Park Movement and area industries also serves to provide a more comprehensive account of the Elkmont Historic District.

For the most part, the Park's staff has worked diligently to compile a holistic interpretation of Elkmont Historic District's history. The public theoretically has access to this interpretation through interpretive panels at Elkmont Historic District and through Internet access to the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* as well as the Elkmont Historic District National Register Nomination Form. However, the Elkmont Historic District is not included in interpretive information available to the public at visitor centers, and there is no signage on main roads in the Park indicating the presence of the Historic District. For this reason, it is questionable how accessible the interpretive information at Elkmont Historic District is if visitors do not know the Historic District is there. Furthermore, not everyone has Internet to access the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* or the National Register Nomination Form for the District. Thus, even though the Park's staff has well interpreted Elkmont Historic District, it matters little if the public does not have access to said interpretation. In this sense, the Park's staff has failed to fulfill the goal of the Park to benefit the people and facilitate their enjoyment of the Park. Yet, the events of the 1990s and the 2000s enabled the possibility of preservation and effective interpretation if the Park's staff choose to *actually* grant the public access to Elkmont Historic District.

Conclusion

The 1993 placement of Elkmont Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places as well as the SHPO and Advisory Council's 1999 recommendation resulted in the Park administrators conducting a study ultimately titled *Elkmont Historic District: Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment* in 2009.³⁰⁸ The project began as an environmental planning initiative, and its purpose was to reevaluate and amend the management strategy for the Elkmont Historic District if appropriate.³⁰⁹ The study provided a thorough natural and cultural history of the District, fulfilled the requirements of the NEPA and NHPA in addition to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The report also stated the Park's interpretive goals, provided six possible action plans, and detailed the impacts of each plan on the environment and cultural landscape.³¹⁰ In response to this study, National Park Service staff selected one of the action plans with the Record of Decision.³¹¹ Thus, the 2009 *Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment* thoroughly explains how the Park will preserve and interpret the District and how visitors will use the District in the future.

The Record of Decision, signed July 1, 2009, states that the selected action for the Elkmont Historic District is preferred Alternative C as described in the 2009 *Final*

³⁰⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 2009.

³⁰⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 3.

³¹⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2009.

³¹¹ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, "Record of Decision for the Final."

*Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment.*³¹² This means the Park will preserve the Daisy Town streetscape and the Appalachian Clubhouse as well as Spence Cabin in Millionaire’s Row and Chapman Cabin in Society Hill.³¹³ The Park will preserve 19 buildings, and contractors will remove the remainder.³¹⁴ The 16 Daisy Town structures and the Chapman Cabin will have their exteriors restored to their period of significance.³¹⁵ The Park’s staff or contractors will rehabilitate the Appalachian Clubhouse and the Spence Cabin for public rental and day use. Park staff or contractors will remove 30 contributing buildings, including 26 cabins, 3 garages, and the Wonderland Hotel Annex.³¹⁶ The National Park Service staff selected this action plan specifically because the removal of buildings allows native species to re-establish a presence in the area, and a cohesive Daisy Town streetscape allows for the best possible interpretation of the District, a concept with which Freeman Tilden would agree.³¹⁷

Thus, in addition to explaining the preservation plan, the Record of Decision also details the Park’s interpretation plan. It adds to the 1982 *General Management Plan*’s statement for interpretation, which is to:

foster enjoyment, understanding, appreciation, and protection of natural and cultural resources both within the Elkmont Historic District by: creating opportunities for emotional and emotional connections to these resources, protecting and perpetuating the significant and diverse natural resources and ecosystems (including forest communities and water resources) found within the Elkmont Historic District,

³¹² Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1.

³¹³ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2.

³¹⁴ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2.

³¹⁵ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2.

³¹⁶ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2.

³¹⁷ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 6-7; Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 69.

keeping them free from impairment, and protecting and perpetuating the tangible (archaeological sites, historic buildings and structures, landscapes, and other features) and intangible (feelings of attachment and family life, myth, folklore, and ideology) aspects of the cultural resources that comprise the District.³¹⁸

The Record of Decision essentially says how the Park's management and staff will accomplish the Elkmont interpretive plan:

The preserved buildings and cultural landscape features, along with wayside exhibits and other interpretive media, will be used to enhance visitor understanding of the history and development of the Elkmont vacation community, its architecture, and the area's important cultural and natural resources.³¹⁹

Thus, together, the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* and the Record of Decision guide both preservation and interpretation at Elkmont Historic District.

As of October 2017, the Park's contractors have removed 34 buildings, rehabilitated the Appalachian Clubhouse and the Spence Cabin, and restored 4 Daisy Town cabins to their period of significance.³²⁰ Though many buildings have been removed, their chimneys remain and will continue to remain for the foreseeable future.³²¹ In some ways the existing chimneys contrasting with the existing buildings send a more powerful message than if all the buildings were still standing. Furthermore, there are interpretive panels throughout the Historic District that tell a fairly complete narrative of the Elkmont communities. Throughout the summer months, interpretive Rangers provide programs at Elkmont, though the autonomous position allows the Ranger to select natural or cultural topics for programming themselves. Many of

³¹⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 25-26.

³¹⁹ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, "Record of Decision for the Final," 2.

³²⁰ Public Affairs Office, "Elkmont Historic District Work Underway," Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC, TN, National Park Service, February 24, 2017; Jim Matheny, "Elkmont Will Shine: Cabins and conflict in the Smokies," WBIR.COM, originally published April, 2017, accessed October 2, 2017, <http://www.wbir.com/article/news/local/elkmont-will-shine-cabins-and-conflict-in-the-smokies/51-433531059>; "Work Underway at Elkmont District," *Smokies Guide*, Summer Edition.

³²¹ Jim Matheny, "4 Elkmont cabins restored and opened to visitors," WBIR.COM, October 1, 2017, accessed October 2, 2017, <http://www.wbir.com/article/news/local/four-elkmont-cabins-restored-and-open-to-visitors/479049369>.

the Historic Structure Reports produced following the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* for preservation of buildings and acquisition of funds also contain biographical information interpreters could use if they were aware of said resource. However, the fact remains that there is minimal easily accessible information to provide the average visitor with knowledge of the Historic District's existence. Regardless of how well the Elkmont Historic District is preserved and interpreted or how powerful the messages attached to it are, it means nothing if the public does not have access to the knowledge of the Historic District's existence which will enable them to benefit from and enjoy this component of *their* Park.

Chapter 3

Elkmont: Alternative Narratives

The previous chapter discussed how Great Smoky Mountains National Park's management arrived at the current management plan for the Elkmont Historic District. However, the National Park Service staff selected the final management plan after careful consideration of several alternative plans. The Park's selection of a management plan affected the preservation and interpretation of the Elkmont Historic District in important ways. This chapter will discuss other courses of action the Park's management could have taken and the possible consequences of such actions. The discussion of other possible outcomes enables an argument for the direct relationship between preservation and *effective* interpretation to the *appropriate* audience to occur within the National Park Service. This relationship suggests that even simple changes to facilities, historic preservation, and interpretation improve public access to cultural resources. Improved public access increases the likelihood that the Park's staff will better interpret and preserve the Historic District. In contrast to this conclusion, the Park staff's efforts to divert traffic flow away from the Historic District suggest that the management's opinion regarding public access and historic preservation is that inaccessibility leads to better preservation.

Alternatives

When the National Park Service and Great Smoky Mountains National Park administrators began preparing a management plan amendment, they proposed six preferred alternatives referred to as Alternatives A through F. Each potential plan outlined options for management and uses for the Elkmont Historic District that incorporated the needs of each

stakeholder and addressed the following issues: cultural resources, natural resources, and visitor experience.³²² Thus, each possible management plan included an assessment of the plan's conceptual basis for its proposal ("Concept"), "Land Protection," "Cultural Resource Management," "Natural Resource Management," "Interpretation and Visitor Use," "Facilities Development," "Water," "Wastewater," "Roads, Parking and Access," "Other Requirements," and "Estimated Development Costs." Of particular interest to this chapter are those details pertaining to preservation ("Concept," "Cultural Resource Management," and "Facilities Development") and interpretation at Elkmont Historic District. The preparers of the report based each proposal on an identified use and varying degrees of meeting resource needs.³²³ Therefore, some of the alternatives clearly favored the preservation of natural resources whereas others favored public interest or cultural resources. Outlining each of the possible management plans will illustrate that what the Park's management chooses to preserve directly influences what is interpreted, how it is interpreted, and who has access to knowledge of the Elkmont Historic District.

Alternative A

Alternative A proposed the removal of all buildings from the Historic District in favor of protecting natural resources.³²⁴ Unlike the original 1982 "No Action Plan", this plan did suggest active restoration of native plants instead of a hands-off policy of treatment of cultural and natural resources in the area.³²⁵ Furthermore, the Park's staff or contractors

³²² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, 2009, vii.

³²³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, vii.

³²⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, viii.

³²⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, viii.

would remove not just the buildings, but also all rock walls and chimneys.³²⁶ In essence, there would be no sign of former human inhabitants in the Historic District. However, the Park's staff would place an interpretive panel at the campground relating the history of the town of Elkmont as well as an interpretive panel at Millionaire's Row covering information on the native synchronous firefly population.³²⁷ No evidence of the former resort Clubs would remain. Clearly, this management plan indicates that lack of preservation leads to no cultural interpretation and an overemphasis on natural resources.

Alternative B

Alternative B took a different approach than Alternative A as it sought to balance the protection of cultural and natural resources. This proposal suggested the preservation of a "contiguous collection of representative buildings restored on the exterior," though chimneys and cultural landscape features would remain throughout the District.³²⁸ The cultural landscape would represent the period of significance (dates, as determined by the National Register nomination), and the Park's staff would place wayside exhibits throughout the District.³²⁹ The Park's staff or contractors would fully rehabilitate the Appalachian Clubhouse, create additional parking, and preserve Daisy Town buildings to function as a museum community.³³⁰

In addition to preserving the buildings, the Park's staff would make efforts to protect natural resources while preserving the aforementioned cultural resources. Thus, the Park's

³²⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix, 57.

³²⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 57.

³²⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³²⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³³⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

staff would actively restore sensitive plant communities and the alluvial forest.³³¹ However, the writers of the document were also careful to note that they carefully selected the developed and restored areas in order to direct visitor use away from sensitive plant communities.³³² This is especially evident in the section titled “Roads and Paths” when the authors detail expected traffic flow, though the majority of their comments refer to the need for road improvements rather than resource protection.³³³ In this sense, natural resources still take precedence over cultural resources since the authors imply that historic preservation has the potential to take place in areas where sensitive natural resources are present.

Though natural resources take precedence, Alternative B does not entirely overlook cultural interpretation. The authors reference the inclusion of exhibits on the history of Elkmont, though they do not indicate if this is the town of Elkmont or the resort Clubs at Elkmont, and they vaguely describe “interpretive features throughout the District that would focus on the natural and cultural resources of the Elkmont Historic District.”³³⁴ In educational and interpretive endeavors, the Park’s staff would focus on changing landscapes, the development of Elkmont, and the travel and tourism leading to Park establishment.³³⁵ The authors state that preservation of the buildings is what enables visitors to learn about human occupation at Elkmont.³³⁶ Thus, those in management and administrative positions recognize the important relationship between preservation and interpretation.

³³¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³³² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³³³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 69-70.

³³⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 63.

³³⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 63.

³³⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 67.

Alternative C

The National Park Service leadership preferred Alternative C, referring to it as the “Preferred Alternative,” and described it as the best choice for environmental conservation.³³⁷ The authors further describe this plan as the most effective balance between natural and cultural resources.³³⁸ This was the selected alternative.³³⁹ This preferred option preserved 16 buildings in Daisy Town for use as a museum community, rehabilitated the Appalachian Clubhouse as a self-guiding museum and day rental as well as Spence Cabin for day rental use, and preserved one cabin in Society Hill because of its association with David C. Chapman and the Park movement.³⁴⁰ All other chimneys remain.³⁴¹ Like Preferred Alternative B, the Park’s staff would actively restore sensitive plant communities and the alluvial forest, and the management plan would direct visitor use of the District away from sensitive areas.³⁴²

This alternative provides similar, though more complete, interpretation efforts as the previous options. In this plan, the Park’s staff provided up to ten interpretive exhibits featuring the history of the town of Elkmont, the native synchronous fireflies, David Chapman’s role in the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and other cultural history, natural history, architecture, logging history, and railroad history topics.³⁴³

The Park’s staff updated the Elkmont Nature Trail brochure to include information on the

³³⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³³⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³³⁹ Regional Director of Southeast Region to Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, “Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement/General Management Plan Amendment, Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina,” 2.

³⁴⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, ix, 78.

³⁴¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, ix.

³⁴² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

³⁴³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 73, 78-79.

area's unique alluvial forest.³⁴⁴ Interpretive and educational material and programming should reflect the themes of changing landscapes, the development of Elkmont, and the travel and tourism that led to the Park's establishment.³⁴⁵ The primary difference between Alternative B and Alternative C is that the latter plan requires Park staff to preserve six additional buildings, including a building in Society Hill and a building in Millionaire's Row. These additional preservation efforts allowed for increased interpretation, so Alternative C also required the placement of up to ten interpretive exhibits throughout the Historic District.³⁴⁶

Alternative C accomplished these efforts through the preservation of the core of the community, thus creating a cultural landscape and increasing opportunities for interpretation while still protecting the surrounding natural resources.³⁴⁷ The authors state that this preservation of the maximum number of landscape features creating a cohesive cultural landscape is what enables visitors to connect with and understand the "former vacation community and the broad cultural pattern of second-home vacation cabins in the southern Appalachians during the 20th century."³⁴⁸ Yet again, the authors understand that physical preservation of the historic buildings is necessary for effective interpretation to the visitor.

Alternative D

Alternative D offers two different, though similar, proposals. D1 suggests the complete removal of the Wonderland Hotel and Annex whereas D2 suggests rebuilding the Wonderland Hotel to its 1928 footprint and rehabilitating the Wonderland Annex so that the

³⁴⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 73.

³⁴⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 73.

³⁴⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 79.

³⁴⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 74.

³⁴⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 74, 77.

Park can use both buildings as a curatorial facility for the Park's cultural resources.³⁴⁹ The option to reconstruct and rehabilitate the Wonderland Hotel enabled the inclusion of interpretive themes not described in the previous alternatives. Alternative D1 allows for the inclusion of an interpretive exhibit highlighting the Wonderland Hotel and the conflict that arose in the 1920s as park boosters debated the area's designation as a national park versus a national forest.³⁵⁰ Similarly, Alternative D2 allows for the inclusion of interpretive exhibits that cover information regarding "the historic view of the hotel, a description of the scenic vista, social life at Elkmont, and the establishment of the Park."³⁵¹ Other preservation activity at the Wonderland Resort area also included the restoration of six contributing cabins for overnight use by scientists conducting research in the Park.³⁵²

Aside from Alternative D's unique treatment of the Wonderland Hotel area, these plans also proposed the retention of 16 historic buildings in Daisy Town, the rehabilitation of the Appalachian Clubhouse, and the retention of a cabin in Society Hill associated with David C. Chapman and the Park movement.³⁵³ Alternative D also proposed the preservation of a cabin in Millionaire's Row associated with the President of the Little River Lumber Company.³⁵⁴ This particular preservation effort allowed for the inclusion of wayside exhibits featuring Colonel Chapman and Colonel Townsend in addition to the use of the Appalachian Clubhouse as a self-guiding museum.³⁵⁵ This plan did mention actively restoring native plant communities, but there was no mention of directing visitor use away from sensitive plant

³⁴⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x, 81.

³⁵⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 85.

³⁵¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 85.

³⁵² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

³⁵³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

³⁵⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

³⁵⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 87.

communities or the alluvial forest. In fact, Alternative D is the first management plan to include seasonal interpretive programs as well as natural and cultural resource education programs for the public.³⁵⁶ Alternative D thus prioritized cultural resources by making the area a cultural resource hub housing the Park's cultural resource artifact and archival collections through NPS policy approved adaptive reuse of historic structures.³⁵⁷ It also provided the possibility of interpreting southern Appalachian resort communities, the logging industry, the Park movement, and important figures in Elkmont's and the Park's past.³⁵⁸

Alternative E

Like Alternative D, Alternative E offers two different proposals. E1 suggests the complete removal of the Wonderland Hotel and Annex whereas E2 suggests the reconstruction of the Wonderland Hotel and the rehabilitation of the Annex for overnight lodging through a concession.³⁵⁹ This plan further suggests the rehabilitation of seven Wonderland cabins for overnight lodging under the concession operation. The concession would operate a dining facility at the Wonderland as well as in-depth education programs for overnight guests.³⁶⁰ The Park's staff or contractors would rehabilitate all contributing cabins in Millionaire's Row for temporary housing for scientists conducting research in the Park.³⁶¹ Like the previous alternatives, the Park's staff or contractors would restore 16 historic buildings at Daisy Town accompanied by wayside exhibits for use as a self-guiding museum community, rehabilitate the Appalachian Clubhouse for day use, and restore one Society Hill

³⁵⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 87.

³⁵⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 85, 86.

³⁵⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 85, 86.

³⁵⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

³⁶⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

³⁶¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x.

cabin associated with David C. Chapman.³⁶² This plan would require a new sewage facility, and the Park's staff would only restore natural resources where the Park's staff or contractors removed buildings in Society Hill.

This particular alternative prioritizes cultural resources through the preservation of nearly all the historic buildings in the Cultural District. This directly correlates to opportunities for interpretation. Alternative E includes many of the previously described interpretive opportunities as well as increased educational programming through the concessioner. Wayside exhibits would feature cultural history, natural history, logging history, railroad construction and the establishment of the town of Elkmont, Colonel Chapman and the Park's establishment, and Colonel Townsend.³⁶³ This is in addition to a revised Elkmont Nature Trail brochure to include the area's history, interior exhibits at the Spence Cabin highlighting the history of the Little River Lumber Company, and a wayside exhibit at the Murphy cabin featuring the establishment of the Little River Railroad.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, Alternative E explicitly states that the Park's staff or the concessioner would offer interpretive and educational programs to the public and lodging guests.³⁶⁵ Thus, it allows for a participatory experience in which the visitor participates in the Southern Appalachian Resort legacy. In converting the Wonderland Hotel into a concession instead of a private enterprise operated independently of the Park, something previous Park

³⁶² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, x-xi, 94.

³⁶³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 97.

³⁶⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 97.

³⁶⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 93, 97-98.

documents emphasized, the historic use of the District would continue into the future.³⁶⁶

Allowing for this type of continued legacy as well as increased “opportunities for emotional and intellectual connections” between visitors and the District would not be possible without preservation of the historic buildings at the Elkmont Historic District.³⁶⁷ Alternative E also demonstrates that an increase in preservation also means increased opportunities for interpretation and therefore visitor connections.

Alternative F

The *General Management Plan Amendment* asserts that Alternative F benefits the cultural resources and historic buildings the most while benefitting the natural resources the least.³⁶⁸ Alternative F states that the “emphasis is on rehabilitation of the cultural landscape and social character of the District by retaining all contributing structures that can be preserved or rehabilitated.”³⁶⁹ However, like D and E, there are two options within this alternative. F1 calls for the complete removal of the Wonderland Hotel and Annex while F2 calls for the rehabilitation of the Annex and the reconstruction of the Wonderland Hotel.³⁷⁰ A concessioner would operate the Wonderland Hotel and Annex for overnight lodging, as in Alternative E.³⁷¹ The Park’s staff or contractors would rehabilitate eight Wonderland cabins, six Millionaire’s Row cabins, and 22 Society Hill cabins for overnight lodging operated by

³⁶⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1982, 37.

³⁶⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 98.

³⁶⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2009, xi.

³⁶⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2009, 105.

³⁷⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, xi.

³⁷¹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, xi.

the concession.³⁷² The concessioner would provide educational programming free to lodgers or a small fee to day visitors.³⁷³ The concessioner's staff would offer educational and interpretive programming at the orientation kiosk, the Wonderland Hotel porch, in the hotel lobby, in Daisy Town, at the Appalachian Clubhouse, at the Spence cabin, and at Chapman cabin.³⁷⁴ The Park's staff or contractors would restore 16 Daisy Town cabins for use as a museum community, and they would rehabilitate the Appalachian Clubhouse for day use and as a self-guiding museum.³⁷⁵ This plan requires a new sewage facility and offers no opportunity for protection of natural resources.³⁷⁶

Alternative F would fulfill nearly all the same benefits as Alternative E, including the wayside exhibits throughout the District.³⁷⁷ There is less opportunity for public interpretation given that free educational programming is not required for the concessioner, and the Park would not restore the David C. Chapman cabin for cultural value but for lodging use. However, this alternative preserves more buildings than any other proposed management plans. The Southern Appalachian Resort legacy would continue at the expense of the area's natural resources, though there would be no greater opportunity for interpretation than in Alternative E. This seems to suggest that overall, increased historic preservation increases the opportunity for interpretation, but there may be a limit to this correlation.

³⁷² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, xi.

³⁷³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 105.

³⁷⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 105.

³⁷⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, xi.

³⁷⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, xii.

³⁷⁷ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 109.

Other Possibilities

In addition to the Park's proposed alternatives for the Elkmont Historic District, further interpretive themes and narratives could be included in the District's interpretive material.³⁷⁸ Formal interpretive themes included in Preferred Alternative C are: "cultural history, natural history, architecture, the logging history of the area, construction of the railroad, and establishment of the town of Elkmont."³⁷⁹ Other formal interpretive themes included in the proposed alternatives include: the Park as a sanctuary, plant communities, natural succession and forest recovery, human occupation, changing landscape, travel and tourism, Park establishment, integration of natural and cultural resources, natural history of synchronous fireflies, history and establishment of Little River Lumber Company, and establishment of Little River Railroad.³⁸⁰ However, additional interpretive themes would increase Elkmont's relevance. Two specific additional interpretive themes include the Park Movement and the Park's history, especially since the authors of the *General Management Plan Amendment* did not include Park establishment in the list of interpretive themes for Preferred Alternative C. The existing interpretive material briefly mentions both of these themes, most directly in the Wonderland Hotel interpretive panel that says the Appalachian

³⁷⁸ Interpretive themes are concepts that provide meaning of the Park for visitors. These themes convey the Park's significance and form the foundation of the messages Park staff send to visitors. Often, Park staff select interpretive themes from a specific list. According to Division of Resource Education, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, *Comprehensive Resource Education Plan*, January 2001, 6-7, Great Smoky Mountains' official interpretive themes are "Diversity and Abundance," "A Continuum of Human Activity," and "A Refuge of Scenic Beauty." These themes encompass every interpretive theme or subtheme Park staff may choose to use, including the official interpretive themes at Elkmont Historic District. Park staff may not select interpretive themes or subthemes that do not reflect the Park's official interpretive themes.

³⁷⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 78.

³⁸⁰ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 61, 67, 87, 97, 109.

and Wonderland Clubs “provided gathering places for park boosters in the 1920s.”³⁸¹ The idea of the Park Movement was also included in most of the Alternatives with the inclusion of preserving the cabin in Society Hill associated with David C. Chapman. However, there are many opportunities to include this vital history of the Elkmont Historic District due to the minimal representation of the Park Movement and the Park’s history at Elkmont today. Including additional interpretive themes at Elkmont Historic District would enable Park staff to provide visitors with a dynamic narrative that could evolve over time as the Park’s and the people’s own history unfolds.

In terms of including the Park Movement as an interpretive theme at Elkmont Historic District, there is enough evidence to argue that Elkmont played a vital role in the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. When Ann Davis suggested the Great Smoky Mountains would make an excellent place for a national park, it was likely with her experience at Elkmont in mind.³⁸² Furthermore, when the Park Movement was underway, many of the park boosters owned property in the Elkmont area, and the tours they provided to legislators and other high profile visitors to the area included an overnight stay at the Appalachian or Wonderland Clubs.³⁸³ It is valid to ask the question of whether Great Smoky Mountains National Park would exist without Elkmont. This is a history worthy of preservation and interpretation. By including this interpretive theme and its associated

³⁸¹ “Wonderland Hotel,” Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2014.

³⁸² Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 13.

³⁸³ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 79, 86, 119-120; John Morrell, “A History of the Cottages in the Vicinity of the Former Town of Elkmont, Namely: The Appalachian Club and the Wonderland Club,” September 2, 1976, 8, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives.

narratives, the Park would foster greater appreciation for both Elkmont and the Park's existence among visitors.

Another interpretive theme that the Park's staff has overlooked is the Park's own history. There are numerous opportunities for the inclusion of the Park's history in interpretation at Elkmont. This includes the history of the Park's natural resources. For example, the Park's first wildlife technician, Willis King, operated the first scientific laboratory in the Park at Elkmont, starting in 1934.³⁸⁴ While this laboratory may not have been at either of the Clubs where preservation is taking place, discussing Willis King's laboratory is an excellent opportunity to incorporate natural history narratives into cultural history narratives, especially since Willis King assisted with the establishment of the Park's fisheries program and conducted the first thorough survey of amphibians in the Park.³⁸⁵

Another possibility for interpreting the Park's history at Elkmont includes interpreting important milestones in the Park's history. An example of interpreting milestones is the Park receiving of electricity because of the 1952 lease renewal at Elkmont.³⁸⁶ Yet, there are more prominent narratives than this. For example, Elkmont provides an excellent opportunity for the Park's staff to discuss the last people to live in the Park. The National Park Service has often overlooked the presence of human inhabitants in national parks. However, the fact that Elkmont Historic District exists and its residents continued to use the District into the 21st century suggests that there are many questions the staff could raise to provoke thought

³⁸⁴ Field Notes, 1934-1938 (bulk dates: 1934-1938), The Willis King Papers 1932-1959 (bulk dates: 1934-1940), Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives.

³⁸⁵ Field Notes, 1934-1938 (bulk dates: 1934-1938), The Willis King Papers 1932-1959 (bulk dates: 1934-1940).

³⁸⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 15, 169; John Morrell, "A History of the Cottages."

among visitors.³⁸⁷ People often conceive of national parks as wilderness places where people do not live or own private property. Yet, people lived at Elkmont and owned private property there until 2001.³⁸⁸ Thus, interpreters could use the Elkmont Historic District and the stories of its former residents as a resource that enables visitors to consider why people think of parks as wilderness areas where people do not own private property. This concept could be further elaborated on by considering and comparing to other national park units such as Canyon de Chelly National Monument as well as national parks in other nations, such as Mexico, where people live and own private property in the nation's national parks.³⁸⁹

Finally, not only is there the narrative of the Park's inhabitants but there is the narrative of the Park's final inhabitants. The Park's management has elected to promote and interpret specific former residents representing a "primitive" lifestyle. These residents include people such as Lem Ownby of Elkmont, a biography of whom the Great Smoky Mountains Association stores sell, and the Walker Sisters, whose preserved cabin is located in the Little Greenbrier area of the Park.³⁹⁰ These people are celebrated, but the Park's interpretive material does not mention the final "modern" residents of the Park. For example, the Park material does not mention Kermit Caughron, the final resident of Cades Cove and last permanent resident of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, or his modern frame house built from materials salvaged from former Cades Cove buildings in 1952 which was

³⁸⁷ "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

³⁸⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 37.

³⁸⁹ Emily Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks: Conservation, Social Justice, and Mexico's National Parks, 1910-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

³⁹⁰ F. Carroll McMahan, *Elkmont's Uncle Lem Ownby: Sage of the Smokies* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013); Rose Houk, Steve Kemp, Kent Cave, Tony Myers, and Edouard E. Exline, *The Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier* (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2005); Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 168.

dismantled and removed from Cades Cove in 2002 following his death in 1999.³⁹¹ Similarly, the Park's interpretive material does not mention Elkmont Historic District as the final and largest community in Great Smoky Mountains after the Park's establishment, though it was a seasonal community. Including the both modern and final residents of the Park in interpretive material and in preservation efforts would enable a more dynamic narrative for interpretation and experience for the visitor. This inclusion at Elkmont Historic District would open conversation between the Park's staff and Park visitors regarding the spectrum of progress and experience in the region over time as the Park preserves the two extreme bookends of architecture within its boundaries, the buildings that belonged to the first residents and the buildings that belonged to the final residents.

A World of Possibilities

The narratives associated with the interpretive themes of the Park Movement and the Park's history are now possible, given the 2016 *Foundation Document's* interpretive theme titled the continuum of human heritage.³⁹² Under the 1982 *General Management Plan*, this would not have been possible since the emphasis was on the pioneer culture associated with the initial settlement of the southern Appalachian region.³⁹³ Though the Park Movement is briefly mentioned in the interpretive panels at the Elkmont Historic District and in the *General Management Plan Amendment*, the interpretive information suggested with the inclusion of the Park's history is overlooked Park wide, not just at Elkmont Historic District, and is reflected in the lack of preservation of buildings *not* associated with the primitive

³⁹¹ Linda Braden Albert, "Cades Cove descendants share history, Culture of Cove," *The Daily Times*, October 12, 2010, accessed October 7, 2017, http://www.thedailytimes.com/community/cades-cove-descendants-share-history-culture-of-cove/article_ce6b4704-0ce3-5d89-b9b4-78cbd8f66d29.html.

³⁹² US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Foundation Document*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2016, 9.

³⁹³ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 12, 32.

pioneer lifestyle and the initial settlement of the region. This dilemma indicates that preservation and interpretation are indeed in close relationship to each other. Failure to preserve the architecture representative of the Park's history and its final residents is a failure to engage visitors in difficult conversations and leaves gaping holes in the interpretation and narrative of the Park's history.

Despite these critiques, since 2001, the Park's staff have done an excellent job of preserving and interpreting the Elkmont Historic District. As the Alternatives illustrate, preservation dictates interpretation to some extent, but not entirely. The Park has elected to remove many buildings and only preserve a select few.³⁹⁴ Yet, they still provide a complete narrative of the Historic District through wayside exhibits and through providing access to the *General Management Plan Amendment* on the internet.³⁹⁵ Thus, the most pressing issue at hand is not the relationship between interpretation and historic preservation because the Park has done these things well in recent years. The issue is visitor accessibility and prioritizing natural resources over cultural resources. In seeking to limit visitation due to protection of natural resources, the public is predominantly unaware of Elkmont as the Elkmont Historic District, but this is what Park staff intended. The *General Management Plan Amendment* explicitly states that the authors' goal is to keep visitation levels to Elkmont

³⁹⁴ Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies*, 166-167, 177; Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 35, 256; Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community: Sevier County, Tennessee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park* for National Park Service, Southeast Region, Atlanta, GA, March 20, 1993, 21; Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Appalachian Club, February 4, 1994, Section 7 Page 2, Section 8 Page 3.

³⁹⁵ "Elkmont Historic District GMP Amendment and EIS," Planning, Environment, and Public Comment, National Park Service, accessed October 2, 2017, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=15794>.

Historic District the same as it was prior to the Historic District's preservation.³⁹⁶ Common sense would suggest visitation levels at a Historic District would be higher after it was preserved. Possible solutions to increase visitorship are simple: create a page for Elkmont alongside the Cades Cove Historic District and the Cataloochee Historic District, place signage along the roads indicating directions to the Elkmont Historic District not just the campground, and produce interpretive material similar to the Cades Cove, Mountain Farm Museum, and Cataloochee brochures for distribution among visitors at the visitor centers.³⁹⁷

However, the most vital solution is for the Park staff to institute a paradigm shift and make both visitor knowledge of and increased visitation levels at Elkmont Historic District a priority, even if this means de-prioritizing protecting the natural resources. It is only when visitors have knowledge of the Historic District's existence that good interpretation can take place at the site. Otherwise, visitors will not visit the Historic District for the enjoyment of cultural resources, and the interpretive efforts at the site will engage no one. As long as this element of management falls short, the Park fails to fulfill its purpose at Elkmont Historic District. However, only few simple changes enable the Park to fulfill its purpose of benefitting the people and facilitating their enjoyment of their heritage.

³⁹⁶ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final*, 79.

³⁹⁷ For example: Carson Brewer, "Cades Cove Tour," (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2010); Tom Robbins, "Mountain Farm Museum Self-Guiding Tour," (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association); "Cataloochee Auto Tour," (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association).

Chapter 4

Elkmont Historic District: Lessons to Learn

The seminal work *With Heritage So Rich* that ultimately led to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 opens with the words, “A nation can be a victim of amnesia. It can lose the memories of what it was, and thereby lose the sense of what it is or what it wants to be.”³⁹⁸ The National Park Service is no different. The twentieth century management of Great Smoky Mountains National Park threatened to create this amnesia through the destruction of seemingly unimportant historic structures due to the fact that they had not been originally included in the Park’s interpretive themes. The Park’s management lost sight of the Park’s ultimate goal as defined in the 1926 enabling legislation and made historic preservation decisions that fostered historic amnesia among the Park’s visitors. Thus, the Internet abounds with descriptions of Elkmont Historic District within Great Smoky Mountains National Park that use the words “discovered,” “found,” “forgotten,” and “ghost town.”³⁹⁹ Analysis of preservation and interpretation at Elkmont Historic District indicates a

³⁹⁸ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, *With Heritage so Rich* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Books, 1999), 23.

³⁹⁹ Austin Coop, “Tour the creepy abandoned building of the Elkmont Historic District,” Destination Strange, Roadtrippers, October 2, 2014, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://roadtrippers.com/stories/elkmont-historic-district>; Ashley Hubbard, “The Sad History of the Elkmont Ghost Town and Why You should Visit Before it’s Gone,” A Southern Gypsy, April 15, 2017, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://asoutherngypsy.com/elkmont-ghost-town/>; Ashley Hubbard, “Finding the Abandoned Wonderland in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” A Southern Gypsy, July 8, 2016, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://asoutherngypsy.com/abandoned-wonderland-smoky-mountains-national-park/>; “Elkmont Ghost Town of the Great Smoky Mountains,” TheGreatSmokies.net, September 7, 2012, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.thegreatsmokies.net/elkmont-ghost-town-great-smoky-mountains/>; “Elkmont Ghost Town,” Trip Advisor, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g143031-d8426768-Reviews-Elkmont_Ghost_Town-Great_Smoky_Mountains_National_Park_Tennessee.html; “Elkmont,” Ghosttowns.com, accessed September 23, 2017, <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/tn/elkmont.html>; Greg Newkirk, “Hiker Discovers and Abandoned Town Inside Tennessee’s Great Smoky Mountains

close relationship between preservation and interpretation, especially when it comes to the public's remembering and participating in the past, and the lessons learned from Elkmont Historic District carry implications for the National Park Service as a whole.

The previous chapters outlining the history of the Elkmont community, the National Park Service management of the Elkmont resorts, and the National Park Service's treatment of the Elkmont Historic District illustrate that the staff at Great Smoky Mountains National Park have come a long way from their twentieth century efforts. Since 2001, Great Smoky Mountains' staff have made great strides towards including more cultural history in the visitor experience, preserving a greater diversity of historic structures, and including a more holistic narrative regarding the Park's own past, including that of Elkmont. Current National Park Service staff can learn from the positive improvements Great Smoky Mountains staff have made. There are also lessons to be learned from the Park management's past mistakes, including the importance of the relationship between interpretation and historic preservation, fiscal responsibility to cultural resources, and the need for greater emphasis on cultural resources in the National Park Service.

The Relationship between Interpretation and Historic Preservation

Freeman Tilden, often called the father of interpretation in the National Parks, believed that interpretation and historic preservation were inextricably linked. He stated in his classic book *Interpreting Our Heritage* that “[n]ot the least of the fruits of adequate interpretation is the certainty that it leads directly toward the very preservation of the treasure itself . . . Indeed, such a result may be the most important end of our interpretation, for what

National Park,” *HuffPost*, last updated October 4, 2014, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/roadtrippers/hiker-discovers-an-abando_b_5927164.html.

we cannot protect we are destined to lose.”⁴⁰⁰ Tilden reinforces this assertion by referring to the *National Park Service Administration Manual* and statement by former Director Wirth by quoting, “Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.”⁴⁰¹ This stance on interpretation lays the foundation for Tilden’s argument that when a visitor understands a resource, that resource becomes a part of the visitor, and the visitor then becomes the protector of the resource because the visitor will not deface, vandalize, or destroy it, any more than damage themselves. The history of the Elkmont Historic District reflects nothing less than these principles. Most people who wrote to newspapers or to Great Smoky Mountains National Park staff in the 1990s in support of preservation of the Elkmont Historic District identified with the District and its history.⁴⁰² Those who wrote in opposition to the preservation of Elkmont Historic District were those who felt saving these buildings was unjust because the Park’s staff had destroyed other buildings within Great Smoky Mountains National Park, though there were a few exceptions to this rule.⁴⁰³ Along similar lines, the Park’s former interpretive themes justified the removal

⁴⁰⁰ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 65.

⁴⁰¹ Freeman Tilden, 65.

⁴⁰² Eleanor Creekmore Dickenson to Michael Tollefson, Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, May 30, 2002, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Paul Hutton to Mr. James M. Ridenour, Director of National Park Service, May 15, 1992, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; “Park lease holder to fight expulsion,” *Mountain Press*, November 25, 1991, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; “Leaseholders hurt, angry at eviction from Smokies,” *The Chattanooga Times*, November 29, 1991, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; “Lifestyle going up in Smokies,” Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Marti Davis, “Preservationist group objects to removal of elkmont cabins,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, June 21, 1995, Elkmont Vertical File, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection.

⁴⁰³ James Richardson, “Nothing historical about Elkmont area,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 18, 2000, Elkmont Vertical File, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library and Archives; Richard Powelson, “Ex-residents want special deal ended,” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, May 3, 1992, Elkmont Vertical File, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection.

of buildings. Thus, a shift in interpretation producing new interpretive themes is what enabled preservation of the Elkmont Historic District.

The emphasis on interpretive themes instead of the Park's and the National Park Service's missions is what led to the lack of preservation and demolition by neglect at Elkmont Historic District during the 1990s. The Park's management chose to emphasize "the period from the middle 1800s to 1920 . . . [and] the finest collection of pioneer log structures in the United States."⁴⁰⁴ In doing so, the Park's management committed to the removal of the majority of 1,200 structures within the Park.⁴⁰⁵ In 1982, when the Park's management made this statement, structures within Elkmont Historic District (aside from Elkmont town) were not included among those removed buildings, though the Park's staff had already slated Elkmont structures for removal. By emphasizing narrow interpretive themes, the Park's management may have preserved the nation's largest collection of pioneer log cabins, but they overlooked the nation's only remaining collection of early 20th century resort cabins in the southern Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee, now known as the Elkmont Historic District.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, the nation's last and most remote southern Appalachian Mountain vernacular resort hotel, the Wonderland Hotel, was lost at Elkmont Historic District due to demolition by neglect.

If the Park's management had remembered that the National Park Service's goal was "to conserve the scenery and the natural and *historic objects* and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them

⁴⁰⁴ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1982, 12-13.

⁴⁰⁵ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 13.

⁴⁰⁶ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Appalachian Club, February 4, 1994, Section 8, Page 1.

unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” and that Great Smoky Mountains National Park’s goal was for “the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” Elkmont Historic District’s cultural resources may have been better protected earlier.⁴⁰⁷ This is especially true given that the 1982 *General Management Plan* further describes the Park’s purpose as, “The purpose of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is to preserve its *exceptionally diverse resources* and to provide for public benefit from and enjoyment of those resources in way that will leave them – and the dynamic natural processes of which they are components – essentially unaltered by the visitors who enjoy them” (emphasis mine).⁴⁰⁸ If Elkmont Historic District contains the nation’s last remaining collection of buildings of their type then their exceptional diversity as a resource is unquestionable. Thus, the relationship between interpretation and historic preservation at Great Smoky Mountains National Park serves as a warning to National Park Service staff at all National Park Service units: overemphasis on interpretive themes has the potential to inhibit fulfillment of the Park’s and the National Park Service’s goals, good interpretation, and historic preservation. Richard Moe reminded historic preservationists in 1999 that “[i]t comes down to this: Preservation is more than just buildings. It’s about creating and enhancing environments that support, educate and enrich the lives of all Americans.”⁴⁰⁹ If what Moe says is true, then the National Park Service and Great Smokies staff do not fulfill interpretive themes or preserve or remove buildings for the sake of a specific image in a national park but for the people.

The idea of interpretation and historic preservation existing for the people brings up another point: Great Smoky Mountains National Park’s staff has now successfully preserved

⁴⁰⁷ 16 U.S.C. (1), emphasis by author; 16 U.S.C. (403).

⁴⁰⁸ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 1982, 5.

⁴⁰⁹ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, *With Heritage so Rich*, 7.

and well interpreted what remains of Elkmont Historic District. However, accessibility continues to remain an important issue and shortfall in Elkmont's management. There is no interpretive information regarding Elkmont at the Park's visitor centers aside from camping information. Other historic areas in the Park, such as Roaring Fork, Cades Cove, and Cataloochee all have their own brochures. Furthermore, the only books specifically on the topic of Elkmont for sale in the Great Smoky Mountains Association stores are *The Last Train to Elkmont: A Look Back at Life on the Little River in the Great Smoky Mountains* by Vic Weals,⁴¹⁰ *Elkmont's Uncle Lem Ownby: Sage of the Smokies* by F. Carroll McMahan, and *Lost Elkmont* by Daniel Paulin. The first book covers the logging industry in Great Smokies and only briefly touches on Elkmont, the second book does not have easily traceable sources, and the third book contains images that the author captioned only with the information on the archival envelopes in which the Park's Archives house the photographs. Thus, when a visitor leaves a visitor center, they possess little to no information regarding Elkmont as a Historic District. Adding to the inaccessibility of Elkmont Historic District is the lack of signage on the roads and markings on maps referring to Elkmont as anything other than a campground and trailheads. As previously discussed in earlier chapters, Elkmont Historic District lacks a presence on the Great Smoky Mountains' website. In short, the success of historic preservation and interpretation at a historic site is only helpful, and even successful, if visitors are aware of the historic district's existence. The authors of *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* raise this question when arguing that the majority of funds, time, and talent used for historical projects result in reports and

⁴¹⁰ Vic Weals, *Last Train to Elkmont: A Look Back at Life on Little River in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville, TN: Olden Press, 1991); F. Carroll McMahan, *Elkmont's Uncle Lem Ownby: Sage of the Smokies* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013); Daniel L. Paulin, *Lost Elkmont* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2015).

materials unread, unused, and inaccessible by and to Park staff and the public.⁴¹¹ Great Smoky Mountains National Park staff and the National Park Service staff as a whole need to reevaluate their intended audience. If Elkmont Historic District is not preserved and interpreted for the public in an accessible manner, Great Smoky Mountains National Park staff and the National Park Service have failed to reach their audience. The solution in the case of Great Smoky Mountains and Elkmont Historic District is as simple as including a web page on Elkmont Historic District alongside the Cades Cove and Cataloochee web pages, producing an Elkmont Historic District brochure similar to the Cades Cove, Cataloochee, and Roaring Fork brochures, and including better signage along the main Great Smokies roads. Lady Bird Johnson stated in the foreword to *With Heritage So Rich*, “preservation does not mean merely the setting aside of thousands of buildings as museum pieces. It means retaining the culturally valuable structures as useful objects.”⁴¹² For the National Park Service and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Lady Bird Johnson’s statement means making those buildings, such as Elkmont Historic District, accessible to the people so that they can, in the spirit and words of Freeman Tilden, find themselves in the nation’s treasures.⁴¹³

The Cost of Historic Preservation

Unfortunately, the fact remains that historic preservation and interpretation both cost money, and the National Park Service’s administration does not allocate enough money to the Division of Cultural Resources or the Division of Education. The authors of *Imperiled*

⁴¹¹ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David P. Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* (Bloomington, IN: Organization of American Historians, 2011), 57.

⁴¹² United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, *With Heritage so Rich*, 17.

⁴¹³ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, *With Heritage so Rich*, 17.

Promise call out the National Park Service on this shortcoming when they state that history is “facing threats, including cuts to state and federal efforts.”⁴¹⁴ It is easy to suggest that their accusation is new. However, that is not the case. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. writes in the 1983 edition of *With Heritage So Rich* that legislation in the 1970s required federal agencies to care for their cultural resources, but the 1980s brought severe National Park Service budget cuts from the Department of the Interior’s administrators.⁴¹⁵ Many of the consequential changes affected programs outside of the National Park Service, but Hosmer still states “[t]he rewriting and dismantling of regulations meticulously drafted in the past two decades [1960 to 1980] to protect historic and natural landmarks represented another sudden reversal for preservation.”⁴¹⁶ This statement leads to Hosmer’s ultimate question, “Can programs mandated by law be operated without money?”⁴¹⁷

The law required the management at Great Smoky Mountains National Park to protect National Register eligible properties, including Elkmont Historic District in the 1980s. Great Smokies’ 1980s management staff failed to do this when they put the policy into place stating that the Park’s staff would remove structures at Elkmont Historic District upon lease expiration. Yet, even if they had elected to preserve the buildings at Elkmont Historic District, it is still likely that significant buildings, such as the Wonderland Hotel, would have been lost. The 1993 Thomason Report stated that the Wonderland Hotel needed

⁴¹⁴ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David P. Thelen, *Imperiled Promise*, 6.

⁴¹⁵ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, *With Heritage so Rich*, 14.

⁴¹⁶ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, 14.

⁴¹⁷ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, 15.

immediate maintenance and preservation attention due to water damage.⁴¹⁸ However, the National Park Service's administrators simply would not have provided the required money, even in the 1990s. Evidence for this claim is that the National Park Service still does not treat cultural resources as a financial priority. Charles Hosmer, Jr. called for fiscal responsibility in 1983, and *Imperiled Promise* was still calling for fiscal responsibility in 2011.⁴¹⁹ My own experience at Great Smoky Mountains National Park suggests that the National Park Service is an agency in which the best case scenario is that the Park receives a cultural resource project's funds five years after the Park's staff requested funding, and that is only if the funds are granted upon the first request.

The Wonderland Hotel would have been lost even if the Park's management of the site in 1993 reflected treatments mandated by law simply because the Wonderland Hotel would have deteriorated beyond repair by the time the Park received funds to stabilize the building. Even still, by the time the Park's staff were able to amend the *General Management Plan*, all properties of the former Wonderland Resort were beyond repair, buildings that were in good condition in 1993. Thus, the Elkmont Historic District serves as a reminder to National Park Service leaders that there is a vital need for park budgets to value cultural resources if a given national park's staff are to save cultural resources. Many national parks possess structures from the mid-twentieth century Mission 66 program. Those buildings will soon need maintenance, though many are likely already in dire need of maintenance.

⁴¹⁸ Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, *The History and Architecture of the Elkmont Community: Sevier County, Tennessee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park* for National Park Service, Southeast Region, Atlanta, GA, March 20, 1993, 74.

⁴¹⁹ United States Conference of Mayors Special Committee on Historic Preservation, *With Heritage so Rich*, 14; Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David P. Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*, 6.

As Elkmont Historic District demonstrates, the National Park Service’s staff can save some buildings even if many are deteriorating, but the National Park Service’s administrators should not wait too long before giving these structures the attention they deserve. Many of these aging structures are overlooked since the National Park Service possesses over 75,000 structural assets the agency must maintain.⁴²⁰ To make matters worse, the National Park Service had \$11.331 billion in deferred maintenance as of September 30, 2016. \$5.668 billion was for paved roads and structures while \$5.663 billion was for all other facilities, including those buildings under the care of the Cultural Resources Division.⁴²¹ With each year that passes, the buildings further deteriorate and the deferred maintenance increases. A park unit’s staff must value their cultural resources in order to prevent their buildings from being placed in the category of deferred maintenance. If they value their resources, they will ask for the funds. If they ask, there are ways of acquiring money for such projects: grants are available, park budgets allocate funds for projects, concessions provide revenue, and partner organizations fund projects.⁴²² Furthermore, a recent discussion has been (and is) taking place regarding an increase in park entrance fees, raising them from \$25 per vehicle to \$70 per vehicle, in order to acquire funds specifically for maintenance and deteriorating buildings.⁴²³ The National Park Service estimates this course of action would increase revenue by \$70 million, annually.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰ “Background,” “NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports,” Planning, Design, and Construction Management, National Park Service, no date, accessed November 3, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>.

⁴²¹ “Background,” “NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports.”

⁴²² “Background,” “NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports.”

⁴²³ NPS Office of Communications, “National Park Service Proposes Target Fee Increases at Parks to Address Maintenance Backlog,” Office of Communications, National Park Service, October 24, 2017, last updated October 24, 2017, accessed November 3, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/10-24-2017-fee-changes-proposal.htm>.

⁴²⁴ NPS Office of Communications, “National Park Service Proposes Target Fee Increases.”

Even still, the chair of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks and the National Parks Conservation Association make valid points when they argue that underfunding, not lack of revenue, is the primary issue at hand.⁴²⁵ The leaders of the National Park Service and Congress must value cultural resources, both requesting and allocating appropriate funding, if the National Park Service is to save and preserve cultural resources. Funding was a major concern for Great Smokies staff regarding Elkmont. When they finally asked for funds for Elkmont they received them. This proves an important lesson for the rest of the National Park Service and Congress. If the National Park Service's leadership does not heed the warning soon, and start at least asking for what they need, an entire chapter of the agency's story will be lost.

Nature versus Culture

Finances are certainly not the only issue at hand when it comes to prioritizing cultural resources. A prominent issue seen in Elkmont Historic District's history is the Park staff's overvaluing of wilderness and nature at the expense of cultural history. The previous chapters outline that valuing wilderness over cultural history occurred in numerous ways in the history of the Elkmont Historic District and led to a policy of demolition by neglect. The overvaluing of wilderness is also a prominent theme in *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*. The study finds that the National Park Service as an agency is guilty of "[a]n underemphasis and underfunding of historical work as priorities shifted to natural

⁴²⁵ Laura Wamsley, "Fees to Enter Popular National Parks would Skyrocket under Interior Department Plan," heard on Morning Edition, NPR, October 25, 2017, last updated October 26, 2017, accessed November 3, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/10/25/560118955/fees-to-enter-popular-national-parks-would-skyrocket-under-interior-department-p>; "Advocacy in Action: Support Increased National Park Funding: Ask your members of Congress to reject the president's proposed budget for fiscal year 2018 and instead help parks recover from years of underfunding," National Parks Conservation Association, no date, accessed November 3, 2017. <https://www.npca.org/advocacy/21-support-increased-national-park-funding>.

resources, law enforcement, and other concerns.⁴²⁶ The report's assertion is true of all units, but visitor expectations suggests this issue takes a unique form depending upon the unit's designation, which indicates a need for a historical awakening among the public.

In my experience, people come to National Parks to experience the wild. They desire to see animals such as bear and elk. They desire to see virgin forests containing champion trees. Some people come to Great Smoky Mountains National Park to see the "pioneer" log cabins and marvel at hearth cooking or blacksmithing demonstrations, but it is also normal for visitors to exhibit confusion as they realize people once lived within the boundaries of a national park. Those people visit National Historic Sites and National Battlefields if they desire to experience cultural history. This is part of the problem when it comes to the lack of preservation and the destruction of buildings in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. If national parks do not contain significant cultural history, there is no need to preserve or experience any historic structures. Thus, there is a need for a paradigm shift in how people understand national parks. National parks, not just Great Smoky Mountains, contain important cultural resources. It is the responsibility of National Park Service staff to convey this to visitors through historic preservation and effective interpretation. If Tilden's ideas about the relationship between interpretation and preservation prove true, as visitors become aware of cultural resources in the national parks, visitors will advocate for preservation, and national parks will preserve cultural resources for future generations. If the National Park Service staff fail to effectively interpret their resources and increase awareness of cultural resources inside national park units among the public, the nation is at risk of losing vital cultural resources, and the public is at risk of historical amnesia.

⁴²⁶ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David P. Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*, 6.

The Story of the Land

The National Park Service has struggled over the years with telling only the story of the land rather than also telling the story of the people who lived upon the land. Similarly, the National Park Service has struggled with telling the story of parks after their establishment. The exhibit panels at Elkmont Historic District demonstrate that the Great Smokies' staff has begun to include the stories of the people who lived on the land prior to the Park's establishment as well as those people who used the land after the Park's establishment. This narrative has not always been inclusive or dynamic, but the history of Elkmont Historic District indicates that the Park's staff are embracing a more fluid rather than concrete narrative as they make changes in management of Elkmont Historic District. The history of Elkmont Historic District and the Park's willingness to alter historic preservation and interpretation also demonstrate the Park's ability to admit that a former policy was a mistake and that there is more than one correct history. These lessons learned from Elkmont Historic District carry National Park Service wide implications, especially as Mission 66 structures begin to age, requiring preservation or replacement.

The story of Elkmont Historic District in many ways is a story of adaptation and growth. Great Smoky Mountains National Park policy regarding Elkmont began in 1982 with a foundational singular narrative of pioneers. This interpretive theme informed how the Park's staff managed Elkmont Historic District when the leases on the resort buildings expired in 1992. By 2010, the Park's staff amended the 1982 *General Management Plan* in order to accommodate a better management plan of Elkmont Historic District that considered both natural and cultural resources. By 2016, Great Smoky Mountains' management adopted a more inclusive approach to interpretation and therefore historic preservation with the

interpretive theme referred to as the continuum of human heritage. The new narrative encompasses multiple interpretive themes allowing for a more complete interpretation of Elkmont. Furthermore, it facilitates an increase of visitor connections through inclusion of more universals associated with tangible structures. In short, interpretation that is more inclusive leads to an increase in preservation because inclusive interpretation justifies the significance of more buildings. Yet, because buildings are tangibles, an increase in preservation enables better interpretation. Thus, Elkmont Historic District possesses not only a story filled with lessons regarding the relationship between preservation and interpretation but it is also a story of hope for all those National Park Service units containing previously insignificant cultural resources.

Conclusion

In 1934, Congress made a decision regarding Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Elkmont, Tennessee, that was unheard of in other national parks. They made the decision to purchase land from Appalachian Club and Wonderland Club residents at Elkmont, Tennessee for a lesser price. In exchange, offered the Club residents lifetime, and, eventually, renewable 20-year, leases. Most of these people lived in relatively new buildings constructed between 1910 and 1930, and their presence in the Park defied the Park's image, management policies, and interpretive policies. The preceding chapters relayed this history and argued that interpretive themes and policies strongly influence preservation. If the staff do not value cultural resources, these resources will be lost forever, a lesson that is valuable to the National Park Service as a whole.

Chapter One laid the foundation for the story of Elkmont Historic District and Great Smoky Mountains staff's management and interpretation by examining concurrently occurring narratives that influenced Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Chapter One further discussed the environmental movement, arguing that it began in the United States as early as the 1830s and formed the foundation for the movement to create the National Park Service. The National Park Service's overemphasis on natural resources dates to the agency's inception. I followed this with a discussion of Appalachian tourism and argued that the tourism industry in the Appalachian region strongly influenced what cultural resources the Great Smoky Mountains Park staff preserved and how they interpreted said cultural resources. I followed the discussion of Appalachian tourism with a brief history of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and argued that the Park was established within the the

context of industrial exploitation as well as the wilderness and tourism movements. Both interpretation and preservation at Great Smokies reflected what visitors wanted to see and experience in the region, even if what they wanted promoted a false narrative. Interpretation in the National Park Service comes down to the many means of communicating information to visitors and facilitating meaningful connections between visitors and the Park's resources. These narratives intersect and inform each other while also forming a context for Elkmont Historic District and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the subject of the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter Two relayed the Park's official historic narrative of Elkmont Historic District, a history of the Park staff's management of Elkmont, and how Elkmont is interpreted to visitors as of October 2017. I ultimately argued in this chapter that, while the the Park's staff has overemphasized natural resources over the years, the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* has enabled thorough interpretation and the preservation of *some* buildings at Elkmont Historic District. However, Elkmont Historic District is still largely inaccessible to the public. Chapter Three discussed alternative management plans that the Park's staff considered and evaluated each alternative's potential for interpretation and preservation at Elkmont Historic District. The chapter further proposed additional interpretive themes the Park's staff could include and provides practical suggestions for application, though I ultimately argued that the possible management plans of Elkmont Historic District demonstrate the most pressing issue at hand is the need for increased visitor knowledge of Elkmont and interpretation of Elkmont outside of the District.

Finally, Chapter Four presented lessons that staff throughout the National Park Service can learn from Great Smoky Mountains' management, interpretation, and

preservation of Elkmont Historic District. The legacy of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Elkmont Historic District urges the National Park Service and its units to remember their goals. Even overemphasizing interpretive themes has the potential to eclipse the goals of park units and the National Park Service. Great Smoky Mountains administrators' management of Elkmont demonstrates to other units with deteriorating cultural resources that mistakes might be made and these resources might be neglected, but they have the potential to be saved if Park staff, the National Park Service, and Congress give cultural resources the attention they deserve from an interpretive, preservation, and fiscal perspective. As tangible connections to the past, the National Park Service should save these, and other buildings, for effective interpretation to the public and historic preservation. In this manner, the National Park Service can fulfill its full goals as stated when it was established in 1916.

Numerous scholars have written monographs on Great Smoky Mountains National Park but, though they mention Elkmont Historic District, no one has written and published an academic history of Elkmont Historic District or an administrative history that discusses the Park staff's management, interpretation, and preservation of this place. This study has gone beyond discussing the timeline of the Park. Instead, it uses the Park and Elkmont Historic District as a case study to home in on themes related to the relationship between interpretation and historic preservation in addition to visitor accessibility. Definitions of interpretation, Freeman Tilden's assertion that interpretation is necessary for effective historic preservation, and the goals of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the National Park Service are accepted on paper. This thesis evaluates how and if those ideas actually play out in Elkmont Historic District. As a result, this thesis provides valuable

lessons for the National Park Service as the agency claims to protect and interpret cultural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, even in units with “national park” designations.⁴²⁷ Certainly, some of the lessons pointed out in this thesis, especially in chapter four, echo the critiques of the National Park Service regarding history in NPS made by the authors of *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* in 2011. This study of Elkmont builds upon those critiques by focusing on a singular national park and historic district in depth, rather than using many brief examples from throughout the National Park Service.⁴²⁸

Since I only examined one historic district within one national park, there is certainly room for continued scholarship. It is worthwhile to consider the relationship between interpretation and historic preservation at other National Park Service units, regardless of the park’s designation, even if only to evaluate whether my claims hold true. Additional scholarship could include an evaluation of what practical steps are effective in improving interpretation, historic preservation, and public accessibility to cultural resources in national parks. Furthermore, a discussion of the broad definition of interpretation and the many ways it manifests itself, even in divisions outside of cultural resources and resource education, would be beneficial. For example, the road signs noting the presence of Elkmont Historic District in the Park that I suggest in Chapters Three and Four fall under the jurisdiction of facilities management, not cultural resources or resource education. Yet, they convey meaningful information to visitors that would enable them to connect with a resource. More traditionally speaking, a history of Elkmont would be an excellent addition to existing

⁴²⁷ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 4th ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 65.

⁴²⁸ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David P. Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* (Bloomington, IN: Organization of American Historians, 2011).

scholarship because while there are monographs on the history of other communities within Great Smoky Mountains National Park, there is not a history of Elkmont. These are only a few possibilities for further scholarship.

Over the years, Great Smoky Mountains staff have made many mistakes when it comes to Elkmont Historic District. Yet, their mistakes provide an opportunity for the National Park Service because the Park administrators' management of Elkmont demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between interpretation and preservation. Poorly selected interpretive themes that portray visitor expectation and perception of a region rather than historical reality have the potential to lead to demolition by neglect. The 1982 *General Management Plan's* interpretive policy emphasizing supreme sanctuary, isolation from modern technology, and pioneer way of life resulted in the loss of significant structures at Elkmont town, Appalachian Club, and Wonderland Club simply because the Park's administrators did not consider those buildings significant.⁴²⁹ The buildings were significant according to the standards of the National Register of Historic Places, but that did not matter in practice. The Park's interpretive and preservation policies meant that the Park's staff could not interpret or preserve the buildings unless an amendment was made to the 1982 *General Management Plan*. Thus, it was only when the 2009 *General Management Plan Amendment* was approved that new interpretive themes were put into place that enabled proper and active preservation of Elkmont Historic District. Interpretation and preservation at Elkmont are still not perfect, but Great Smoky Mountains National Park administrators have come a long way in their management of Elkmont. As such, there are many lessons the National Park Service, interpreters, historic preservationists, and historians can learn from Great Smoky Mountains

⁴²⁹ US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1982, 32-33.

staff's management of Elkmont over time. However, the most important one remains this: good interpretation is necessary for preservation of cultural resources in national parks. Without effective interpretation to the public, the nation's historic treasures will be lost forever.

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Appendix A

The National Register's History of Elkmont, an Excerpt

The following document is a history of Elkmont, Tennessee first published in Thomason and Associates' National Register of Historic Places nomination form in 1993. The authors of the 2009 *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment* quoted this text to provide a history of what they call "The Resort Era at Elkmont" which occurred from 1910 to 1934. The text as they quoted it is as follows:

The scenic beauty and moderate climate of the southern Appalachian Mountains have long attracted visitors, particularly in the summer months. However, the difficulty of transportation through the mountains in the nineteenth century limited the type of visitors and the areas able to be developed for summer visitation. Soon after the construction of the Buncombe Turnpike in the 1820s, which connected Greeneville, Tennessee to Greenville, South Carolina, summer colonies of wealthy South Carolinians developed in the North Carolina mountains, south and east of the Great Smoky Mountains. The purported healthy climate of the mountains was a particular lure for visitors during the middle to late nineteenth century.

Various types of health resorts, many located on springs, were established in western North Carolina and East Tennessee. One of the earliest resorts constructed in Sevier County was Henderson Springs, known as a health retreat as early as the 1830s. A two-story frame hotel and 22 cabins were built later in the 19th century, attracting the patronage of prominent Knoxville families.

The construction of railroads vastly enhanced the potential of the Great Smoky Mountains region for recreational purposes, particularly for those with more moderate incomes. Knoxville was accessible by rail prior to the Civil War, but rail lines did not extend into Sevier County until after the turn of the century. While resorts did develop prior to building of the railroad in this area, they were located along more accessible roads or water routes. An advertisement in an 1897 edition of the Knoxville Journal for Dupont Springs, located 12 miles west of Sevierville, touted not only its three kinds of water, but also its "cool and invigorating" air and "unequaled" scenery. Visitors were advised to travel by boat or horseback to Sevierville. However, the more remote areas of the Great Smoky Mountains remained out of the reach of most summer visitors until after 1900.

The construction of railroads allowed the timber resources of the southern Appalachians to be utilized commercially. After 1900, large northern timber companies, facing depletion of the timberlands in the northeast and Great Lakes, moved into the Great Smoky Mountains and began to develop the infrastructure needed to extract timber. Among the several was one of the large timber companies that worked within the Great Smoky Mountains was The Little River Lumber Company. In 1901, under the direction of the General Manager, Colonel W.B. Townsend, the company began to purchase land in East Tennessee. The Little River Lumber Company was especially interested in cutting hardwoods and hemlock at the higher elevations. To enable them to extract this wood, they created the Little River Railroad Company. Chartered in 1901, it operated until it was dissolved in 1940.

The Little River Railroad Company recognized the opportunity to use the railway for multiple purposes. An observation car was added to the lumber train for passengers who wished to view the scenery along the Little River and by 1909, daily train service was available from Knoxville's Southern Station to Elkmont. The lumber company not only encouraged, but promoted development of land that was logged. In 1910, the Little River Lumber Company deeded the Appalachian Club 50 acres "more or less" along Jakes Creek just upstream from Elkmont. The lumber company retained timber and mineral rights, while the Appalachian Club was granted the right "to construct at its own expense, a club house for the accommodation of members and guests, and the right or privilege, of constructing such cottages, or cabins, by itself, or by its members as may be desired" (Sevier County 1910).

Within the District, the Appalachian Club was a Knoxville-based social club. A 1915 brochure describes the Appalachian Club as "composed principally of Knoxville businessmen, for the purpose of providing a place for recreation and rest for themselves." In 1919, the club was reconstituted and formally incorporated as the New Appalachian Club, with its headquarters in Knoxville and its principal clubhouse at Elkmont (Sevier County 1919). Club members were able to buy lots, and rooms in the original clubhouse were deeded to individuals for personal ownership. Membership in the Appalachian Club and the New Appalachian Club included a banker (J. Wylie Brownlee), a university professor (R.C. Matthews), several attorneys (including Forrest Andrews and James B. Wright) and two members associated with the Little River Lumber Company or the railroad (General Manager Col. W.B. Townsend and Railroad Superintendent J. P. Murphy). Wright, Townsend, Murphy, and Brownlee were all cabin owners by 1919.

While predominantly based in Knoxville, members of the Appalachian Club also came from other places in the South. Testimony by H.E. Wright in 1933 noted that, "we have located at Elkmont now 65 summer homes owned by the very best citizens of Knoxville, some from Memphis, some from Athens, some from Nashville, and some from Kentucky, and other places." However, most of the former cottage owners at the Appalachian Clubs, and at the later Wonderland Club, who became leaseholders within the Park, were from Knoxville. Their Knoxville business affiliations included Richards Loan Company, Bowman Hat Company, Price-

Baumann Tire, Swan Brothers Bakery and Galyon Lumber. The Little River Lumber Company maintained a legal affiliation with the club until 1930 when a quit claim was filed, thereby ending all formal connections.

One year after the establishment of the Appalachian Clubhouse, the Little River Lumber Company deeded to C.B. Carter a tract of land immediately downstream from the Town of Elkmont. Carter and his brothers founded the Wonderland Park Company and the next year purchased an adjacent tract of land from the lumber company. Construction of the Wonderland Hotel began in the spring of 1912, and the hotel was ready for business by June 15 of that year.

After construction of the Appalachian Club and Wonderland Hotel, a daily passenger train, the Elkmont Special, ran from Knoxville up the Little River to its final three stops that were just minutes apart at the Wonderland Park Hotel, Elkmont, and the Appalachian Club. The trip took approximately two and one-half hours from Knoxville. The Little River Railroad and the Knoxville and Augusta Railroad also promoted "Elkmont Country" through brochures. A 1914 brochure assured the reader that besides being noted for its beautiful scenery, Elkmont Country "is becoming more popular each year as a recreation place for people from all over the South, some of whom have built summer cottages so they and their families may spend the summers in one of the most delightful mountain climates in the entire country." In the same brochure, the Appalachian Club was described in the following terms:

The Appalachian Club . . . has made extensive improvement on its club house and annex since last year, and is now in position to serve its members better than ever before. A complete water and sewerage system has been installed, also a new and up-to-date electric light plan. Here, situated at an elevation of twenty-five hundred feet above sea level and commanding a magnificent view of the Smoky Mountains, some forty or fifty cottages have been built by members of the club. The natural surroundings of the cottages are so beautiful that the possibilities for enhancing the natural beauties are manifold, and this is one of the charms of the place. On the west side of Townsend Avenue flows a tumultuous little mountain stream which furnishes running water in each summer home, and the cottages, rustic and simple, can boast of bath rooms, shower baths and sewer connections together with a natural swimming pool near the club house.

Wonderland Park is described in equally glowing terms in a 1915 brochure:

One of the most beautiful recreation places in the Elkmont country. Elevation two thousand five hundred feet. Hotel new and modern, situated in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains. Wonderland Park is noted for its picturesque scenery, with river and mountains in delightful vista. A number of rustic cottages have been built here, which add to the attractiveness of the place. Excellent mountain and rainbow trout fishing in Little River. Horseback

riding, bathing and mountain climbing. Accommodations for two hundred guests ...

While the Wonderland Park Hotel was fairly typical of the resorts of the day, the owners of the Wonderland Park Company (the Carter brothers from Knoxville) had land speculation in mind. The original plat for Wonderland had more than 650 tracts, and the Wonderland Park Addition had thousands more. The land that cost \$5 per acre or less was subdivided into 16 lots per acre. Had it actually been built, Wonderland Park would have had the density of a major city for its time. However, even if the grid of streets had been laid, many of the tracts were too small and located on sites not suitable for building.

The President of the Wonderland Company himself sold land through agents in Orlando, Florida. Aside from the hotel and annex, less than twenty buildings were built at Wonderland. Many of the purchasers of land, in fact, never saw the tracts they had bought. It was not until decades later, after creation of the National Park, that some of the business practices of the Carter brothers became known. After the Carters conveyed this land at Elkmont to the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, the deeds and title papers of all prior lot owners in this section were canceled, since the Carters had possession of the land and the locations of the owners of the tracts were unknown. However, even those who had clear title seldom recouped their purchase price and taxes in the creation of the Park. Many were notified that their tracts were only 25-by-100 feet and were on the side of a hill or mountain. Generally, they were offered from \$2 to \$25 for each tract, depending on location.

Due to the legal problems it created, the activities of the Wonderland Park Company were short-lived. By 1913, legal disputes developed between the Carter brothers, and the subsequent lawsuit dragged on for a number of years during which time the defendant, T.M. Carter, died.

In 1915, the Wonderland Park Hotel and immediately adjacent lands and buildings were sold to a group of Knoxville citizens who formed a private club, similar in nature to the Appalachian Club. Both clubs operated hotels that were available to members but were apparently also rented to paying guests. In 1920, the Wonderland Club built the hotel annex that provided additional rooms for club members. The Appalachian Club Hotel burned down in 1933 and one year later was replaced by another clubhouse that still stands today. For almost a decade and a half, recreational and industrial use of the East Prong of the Little River existed side by side. The train from Knoxville made day trips to Elkmont possible. Some stayed at the hotels for short periods, while club members often made extended visits. Passengers could disembark at the imposing frame hotel on the hill. The next stop was the town of Elkmont. The final passenger stop was the Appalachian Club Station, where visitors would cross the creek on a footbridge to the Clubhouse. Just beyond the Appalachian Club Station, geared engines (also called Shay type locomotives) replaced the piston-

driven locomotives and continued up the steep hills to where lumber operations were occurring.

It should be noted that industrial and recreational users of the East Prong of the Little River were not mutually exclusive groups. Several members of the Appalachian Club were at some point connected to the Little River Lumber Company. Furthermore, in 1928, a 65-acre tract of land belonging to the Little River Lumber Company, adjacent to the Appalachian Club holdings, was deeded to Alice U. Morier, who had married the aging Colonel Townsend. Townsend had been listed as a lot owner in 1919. These properties, adjacent to the Appalachian Club along Millionaire's Row, were not part of the original Appalachian Club deed, but were later included in the negotiation of leases with the Park.

By 1923, much of the accessible timber above the East Prong had been removed, and the lumber company began to focus its efforts on its operations on the Middle Prong. The train to Elkmont was discontinued in 1925 and the tracks were dismantled. In 1926, a gravel road was built through the gorge from Townsend to Elkmont, providing an easier route than the steep mountain road from Gatlinburg through Fighting Creek Gap. The development of roads into Elkmont in the mid-1920s reflects increasing automobile ownership. Many of the cottage owners had been driving as far as Townsend and taking the train from there to Elkmont. Auto-tourism eclipsed the importance of the railroad in the development of the southern mountains for recreational purposes and was later to be a major contributing factor in the creation of the Park. The road from Townsend to Elkmont and on to Gatlinburg was part of the one hundred mile scenic loop that began and ended in Knoxville. This road, which still exists today, passes through Maryville, Walland, Elkmont, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville, and along a portion of the route of present day I-40. The section of the roadway from Townsend to Gatlinburg is within the Park.

Tourism grew and some of the buildings within the town of Elkmont were bought and improved to meet the needs of tourists and visitors to the Wonderland and Appalachian Clubs arriving by bus and private car. In 1927, hotel rooms at the Wonderland Park rented for \$2.50 per day, but visitors renting for a week at a time paid a daily rate that was even lower. Cabins also were available for rent. At the Appalachian Club, residents and visitors stayed in cabins and dined at the clubhouse. Some residents brought their servants along for the summer. Recreation at both locations included hiking, picnicking, horseback riding, outdoor games like horseshoes and badminton, and formal and informal dances. One popular spot during the summer was the swimming hole that formed behind a dammed area of the Little River near the Appalachian Club.

Construction of cabins continued through the 1920s. By 1931, 19 cabins were located at Wonderland. At the Appalachian Club, a number of cabins were also built during the 1920s. Some 75 cabins were present in the two areas just prior to the Depression. A few cabins were built in the 1930s, most notably those built by Mrs. Alice Townsend along the Little River. The Elkmont area in the early 1930s consisted of

the cabins, hotel, clubhouse, the small community of Elkmont, and a few mountain farmsteads.

When the community of Elkmont was created around 1908, a cemetery was also established. Located north of the Wonderland Hotel, it was the only cemetery in the area. In 1928, a new Elkmont Cemetery was dedicated adjacent to the Appalachian Club. This cemetery was donated by Levi Ownby [correction to original nomination should read Levi Trentham] in memory of his wife.⁴³⁰

⁴³⁰ Thomason and Associates and National Park Service, "Elkmont Historic District, Great Smoky Mountains N.P.," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Appalachian Club, February 4, 1994, Section 8 Page 4 - Section 8 Page 12 as quoted in National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, *Elkmont Historic District, Final Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan Amendment*, 2009, 165-168.

Appendix B

Great Smoky Mountains National Park Website Images

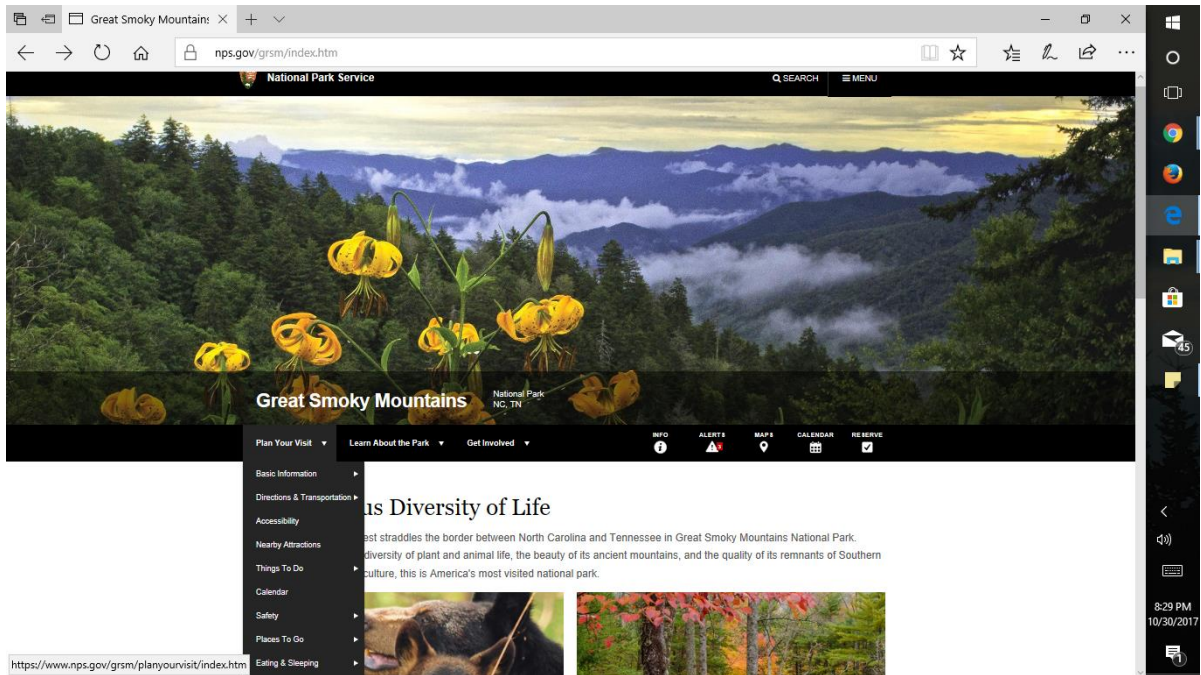


Figure 3. Screenshot of Great Smoky Mountains National Park homepage including the “Plan Your Visit” bar. “A Wondrous Diversity of Life,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

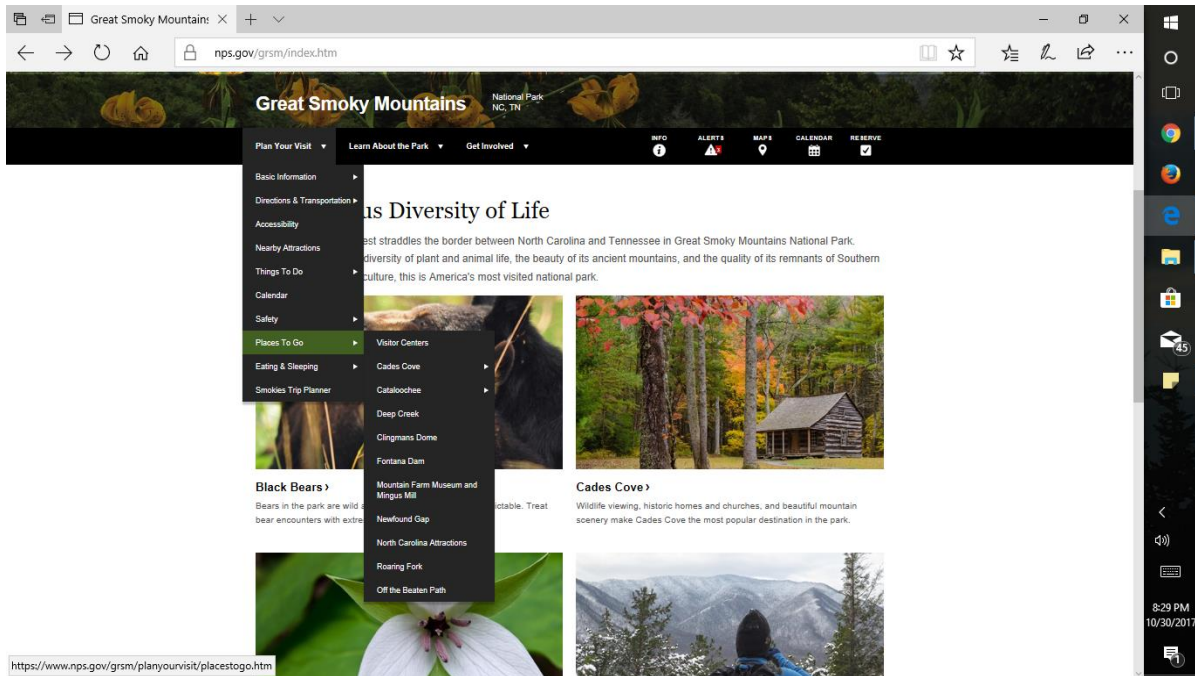


Figure 4. Screenshot of Great Smoky Mountains National Park homepage including the “Plan Your Visit” bar and “Places to See” bar. “A Wondrous Diversity of Life,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

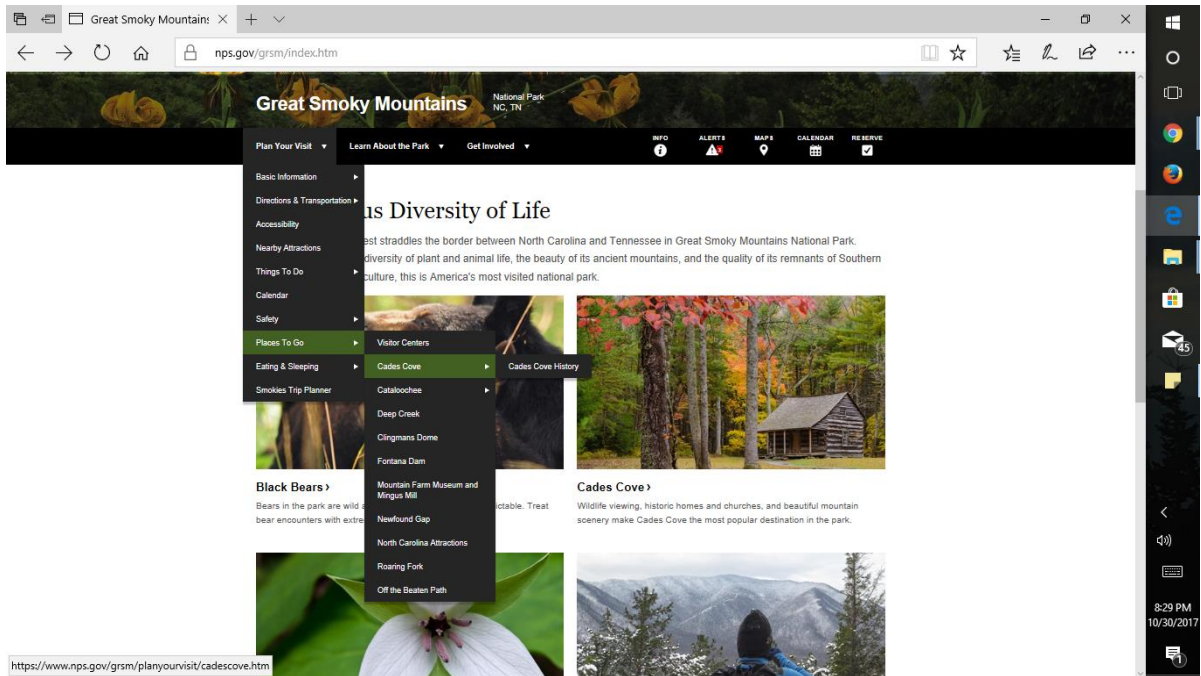


Figure 5. Screenshot of Great Smoky Mountains National Park homepage including the “Plan Your Visit,” “Places to See,” and “Cades Cove” bars. “A Wondrous Diversity of Life,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

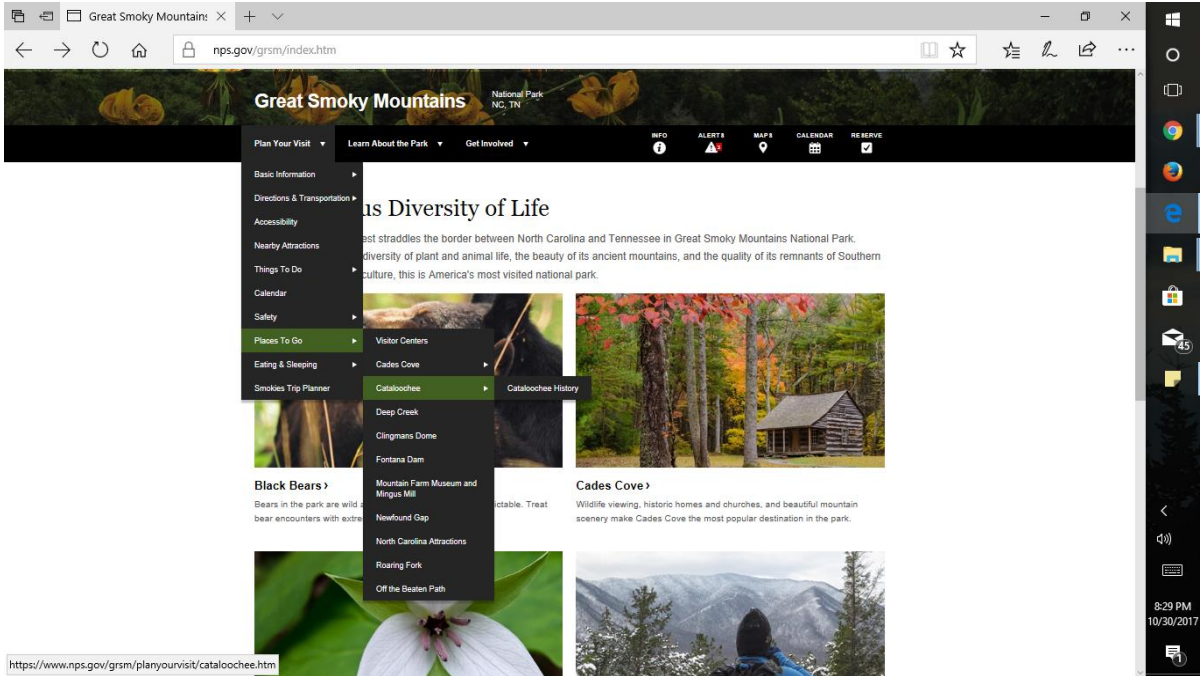


Figure 6. Screenshot of Great Smoky Mountains National Park homepage including the “Plan Your Visit,” “Places to See,” and “Cataloochee” bars. “A Wondrous Diversity of Life,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

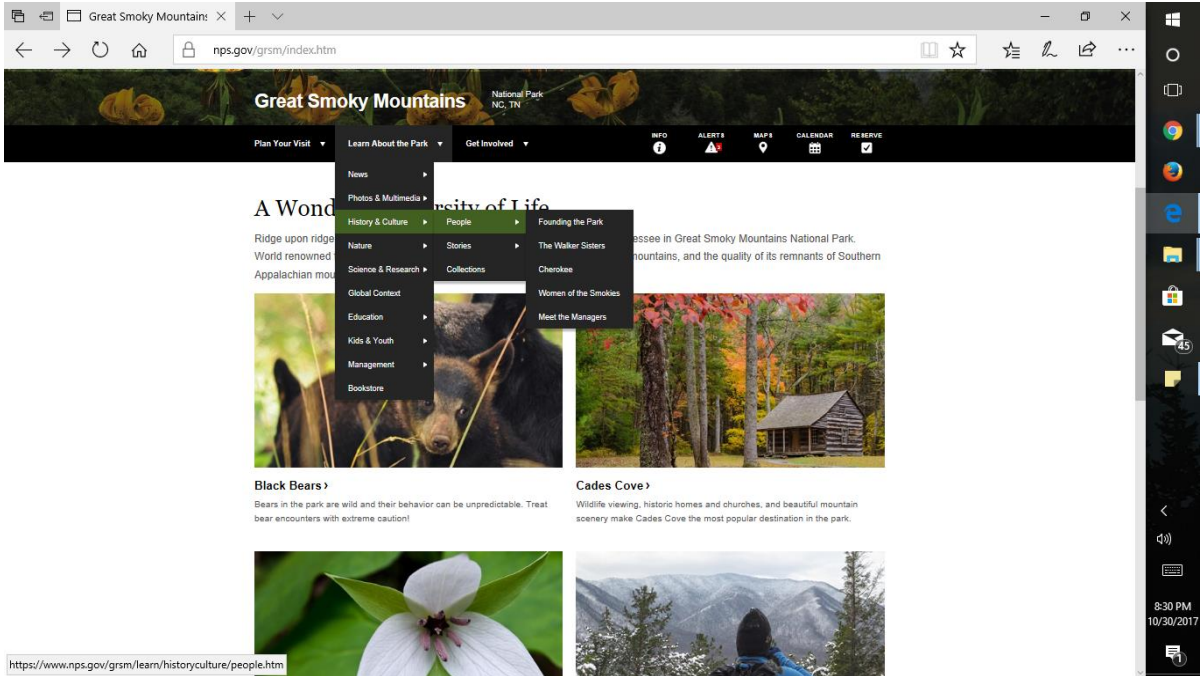


Figure 7. Screenshot of Great Smoky Mountains National Park homepage including the “History & Culture” and “People” bars. “A Wondrous Diversity of Life,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

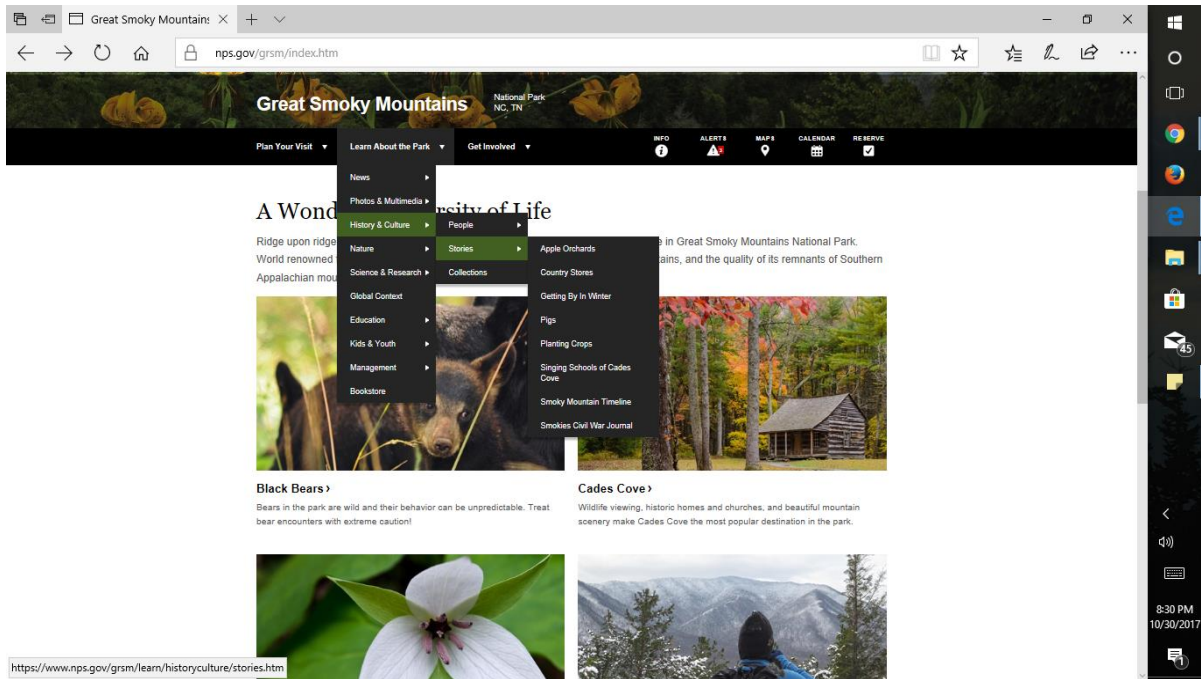


Figure 8. Screenshot of Great Smoky Mountains National Park homepage including the “History & Culture” and “Stories” bars. “A Wondrous Diversity of Life,” Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, last updated April 25, 2017, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm>.

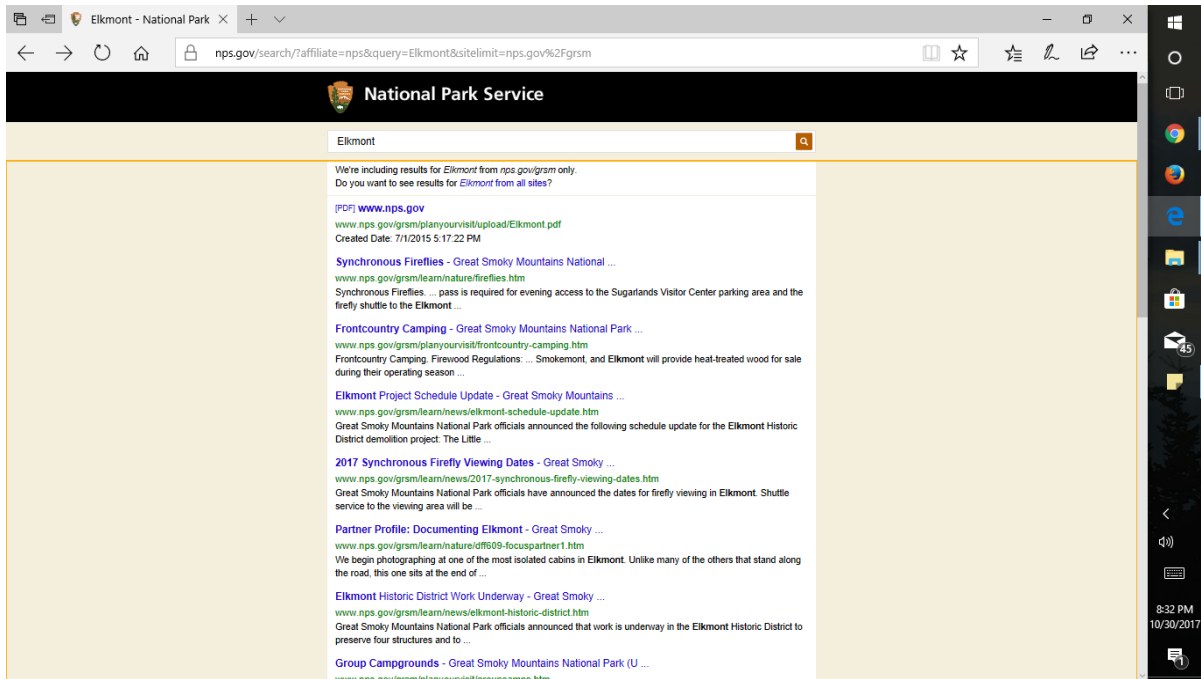


Figure 9. Screenshot of “Elkmont” search results on Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, Image 1. “Elkmont” search, Page 1, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=Elkmont&sitelimit=nps.gov%2Fgrsm>.

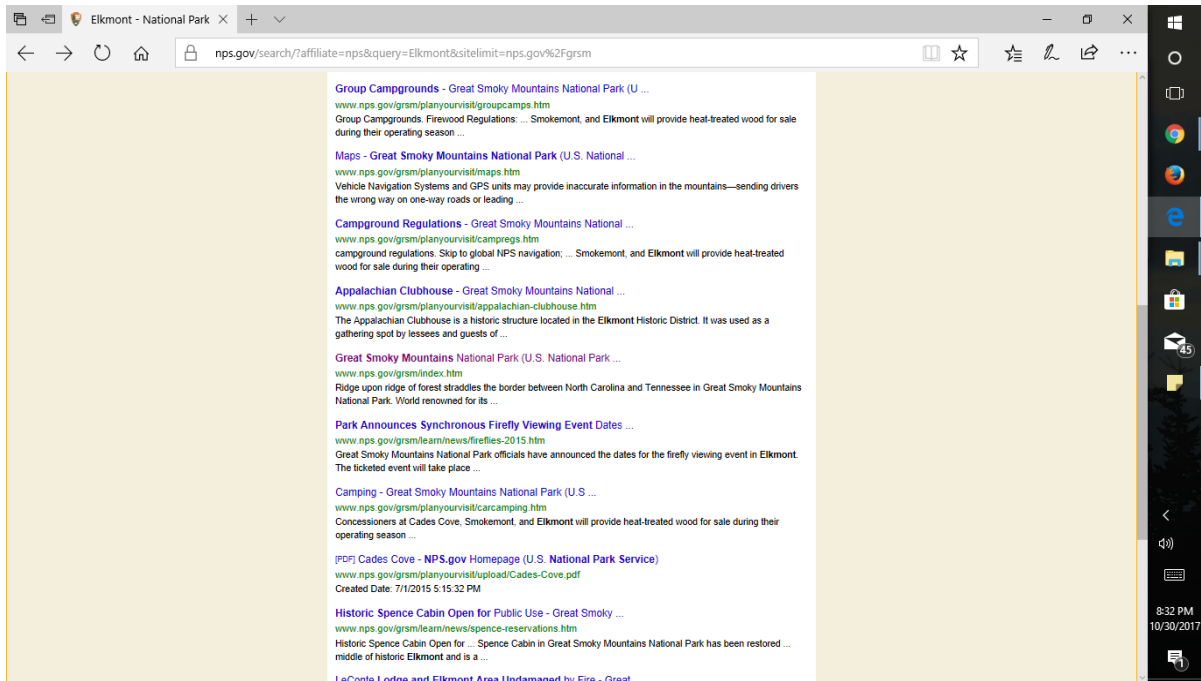


Figure 10. Screenshot of “Elkmont” search results on Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, Image 2. “Elkmont” search, Page 1, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2017,

<https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=Elkmont&sitelimit=nps.gov%2Fgrsm>.

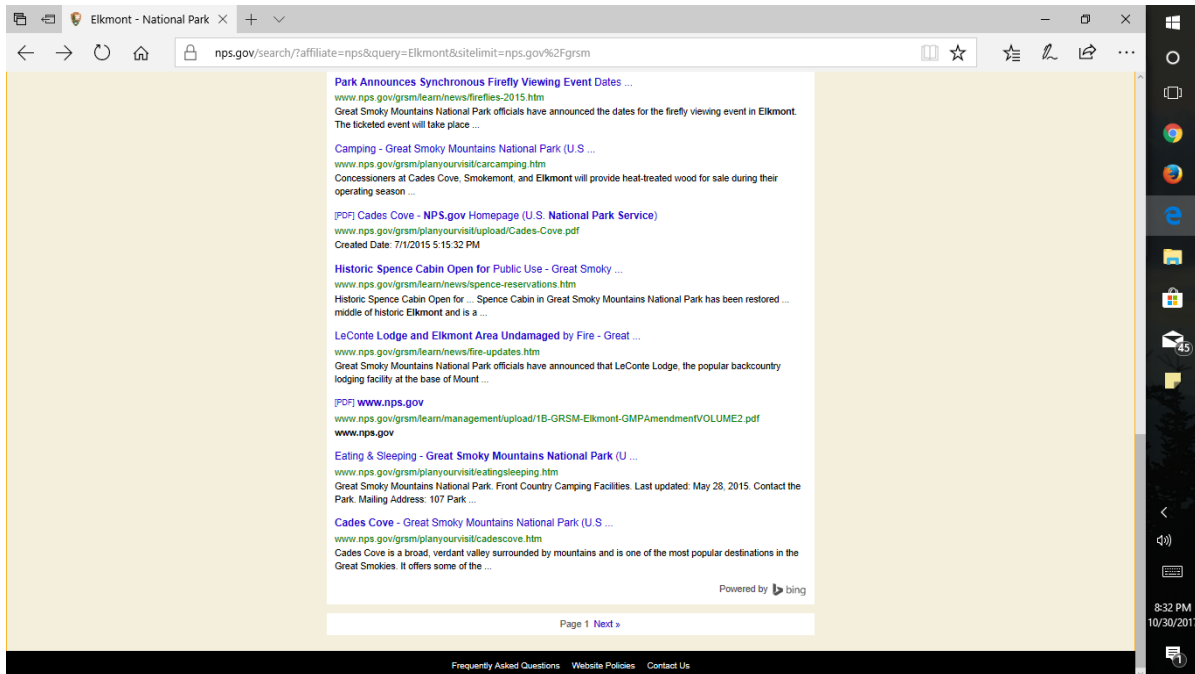


Figure 11. Screenshot of “Elkmont” search results on Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, Image 3. “Elkmont” search, Page 1, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=Elkmont&sitelimit=nps.gov%2Fgrsm>

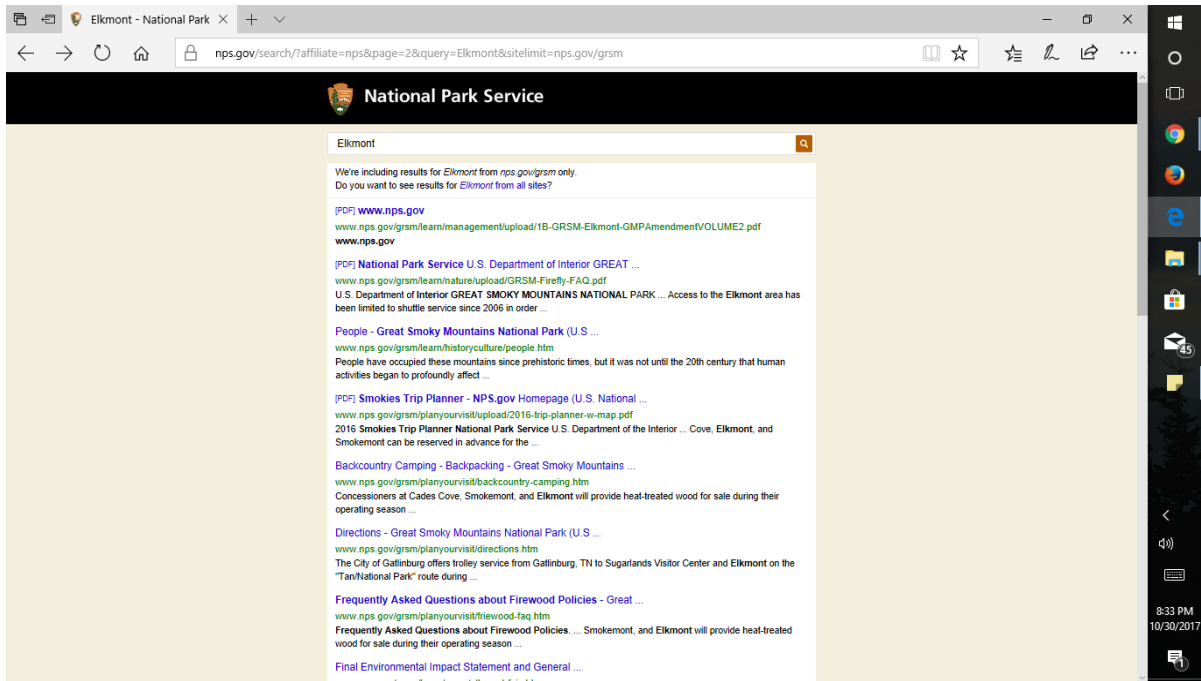


Figure 12. Screenshot of “Elkmont” search results on Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, Image 4. “Elkmont” search, Page 2, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&page=2&query=Elkmont&sitelimit=nps.gov/grsm>.

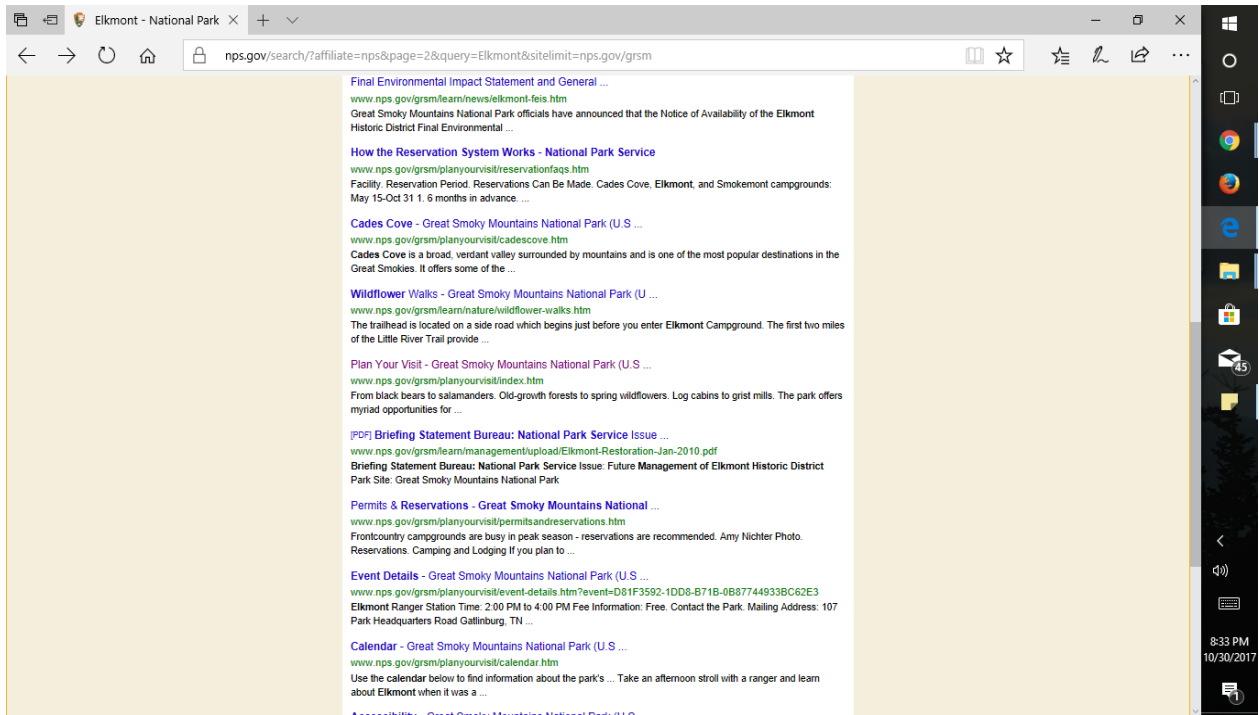


Figure 13. Screenshot of “Elkmont” search results on Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, Image 5. “Elkmont” search, Page 2, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&page=2&query=Elkmont&sitelimit=nps.gov/grsm>.

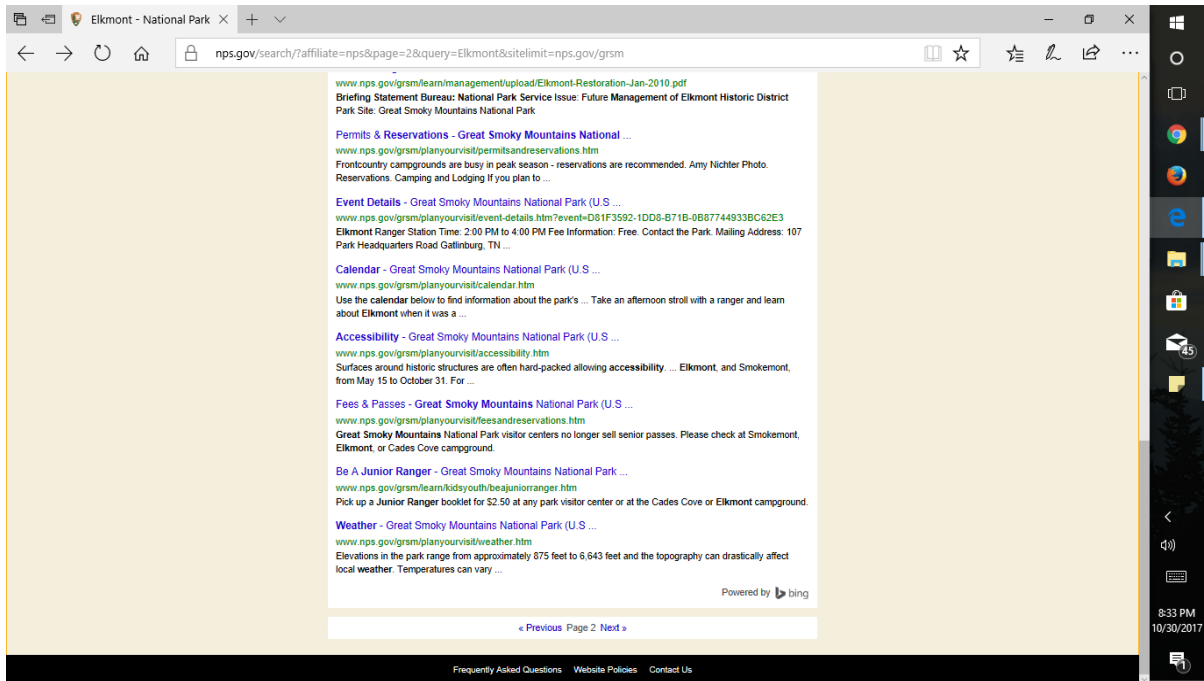


Figure 14. Screenshot of “Elkmont” search results on Great Smoky Mountains National Park website, Image 6. “Elkmont” search, Page 2, Great Smoky Mountains National Park NC, TN, National Park Service, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&page=2&query=Elkmont&sitelimit=nps.gov/grsm>.

Appendix C

Elkmont Interpretive Panel Exhibits

This section contains images of interpretive panels placed throughout Elkmont Historic District. There are also panels located at the Elkmont Campground and at the Chapman/Byer Cabin, though those interpretive panels are not pictured here. Figures 12 through 17 appear as they are mentioned in chapter two. Figures 18 through 23 appear in no particular order as they are not mentioned in the text, though they serve as evidence of interpretation at Elkmont Historic District. All captions include the location of the panels and may be located on the maps in figure 1 on page 5 and figure 2 on page 6 in Chapter Two.



Figure 15. The Appalachian Clubhouse Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Appalachian Clubhouse parking area facing the southern elevation of the Appalachian Clubhouse. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of "Appalachian Clubhouse," Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2010 or 2011.



Figure 16. Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Mayo Cabin. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of "Daisy Town's Eclectic Architecture," Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2014.



Figure 17. Back to Nature Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Baumann Cabin facing the Daisy Town streetscape and Appalachian Clubhouse. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of "Back to Nature," Interpretive Panel, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed 2014.

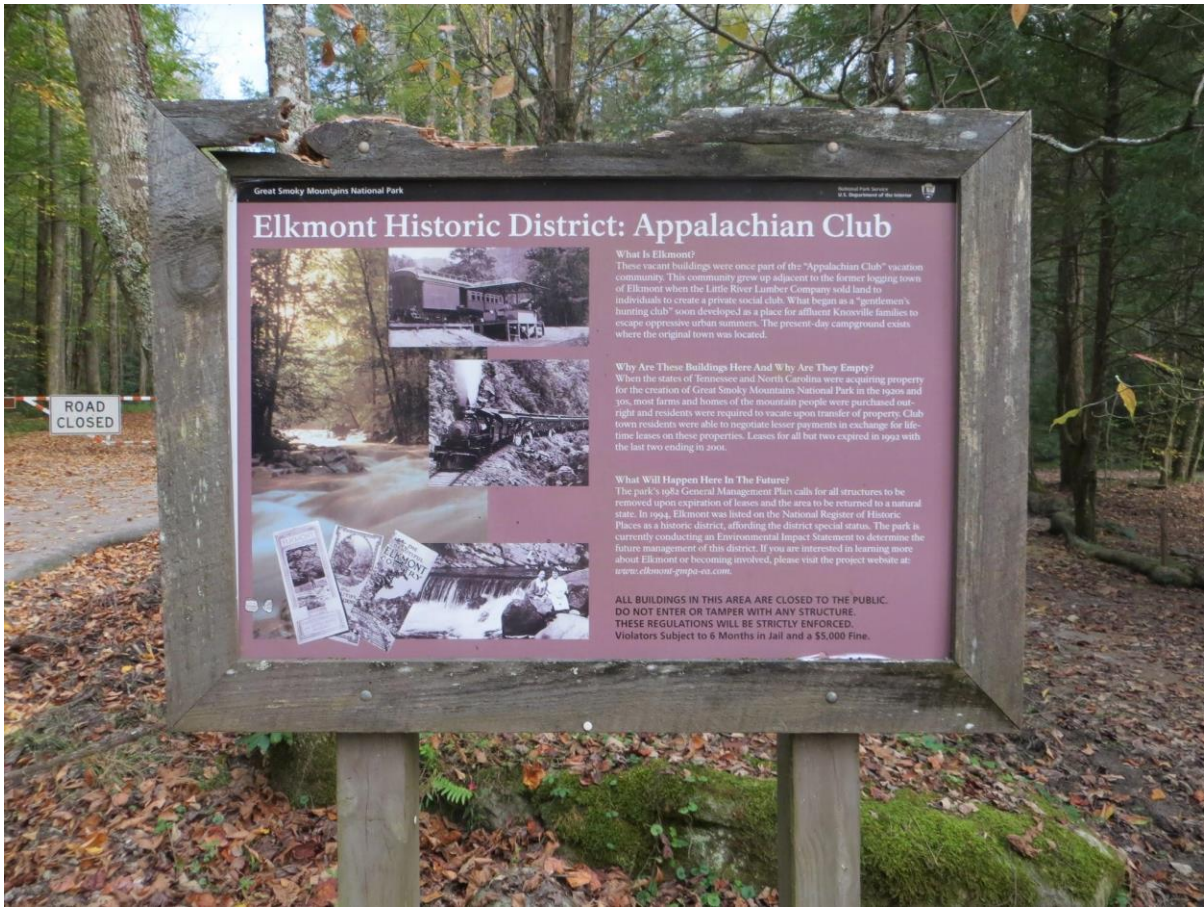


Figure 18. Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Jake's Creek trailhead. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Jake's Creek Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2005.



Figure 19. Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club Interpretive Panel. Located beside the parking area for the Little River trailhead. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of "Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club," Interpretive Panel, Beside Parking Area for Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2005.



Figure 20. Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Little River trailhead. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of “Elkmont Historic District: Appalachian Club,” Interpretive Panel, Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2005.



Figure 21. A Rare Mountain Forest Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Little River trailhead parking area. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of “A Rare Mountain Forest,” Interpretive Panel, Parking Area for Little River Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2014.



Figure 22. Spence Cabin Interpretive Panel. Located beside the Spence Cabin. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of "Spence Cabin," Interpretive Panel, Spence Cabin, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2014.



Figure 23. The Appalachian Club Interpretive Panel. Located on the eastern elevation of the Appalachian Clubhouse. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of “The Appalachian Club,” Interpretive Panel, Eastern Elevation of Appalachian Clubhouse, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2010 or 2011.



Figure 24. Quite a Social Place Interpretive Panel. Located on the eastern elevation of the Appalachian Clubhouse. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of “Quite a Social Place,” Interpretive Panel, Eastern Elevation of Appalachian Clubhouse, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2010 or 2011.



Figure 25. Elkmont Nature Trail Interpretive Panel. Located at the Elkmont Natural Trail trailhead. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of “Elkmont Nature Trail,” Interpretive Panel, Elkmont Nature Trail Trailhead, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2014.



Figure 26. Wonderland Hotel Interpretive Panel. Located at the base of the stairs leading up to the former Wonderland Hotel. Photograph by Jessica McCausland, October 13, 2017 of “Wonderland Hotel,” Interpretive Panel, Base of Wonderland Hotel Stairs, Elkmont, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, placed in 2014.

Vita

Jessica McCausland was born in Champaign, IL to David and Linda McCausland. She grew up living in the foothills of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and visited the mountains regularly as a child. She attended Pellissippi State Community College and graduated with an Associate of Arts in History in May 2012. At this time, Jessica accepted a position at the Pellissippi State Community College Blount Campus library. She returned to school to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in History at Johnson University in August 2013. During the spring 2015 semester, Jessica completed a senior research project on the history of Elkmont, Tennessee. She also held an archives internship at Great Smoky Mountains National Park during summer 2015. Jessica graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in History from Johnson University in December 2015 and accepted a graduate assistantship in the History Department at Appalachian State University beginning in January 2016. While pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Public History at Appalachian State University, she also held interpretation internships at Great Smoky Mountains National Park during summer 2016 and summer 2017. Jessica was awarded her M.A. in December 2017 and intends to pursue a career with the National Park Service.